

SURF 9

A Secure Understanding of Real Fenomena

The main point of this essay is to throw light on some problems that emerge from the claim in a previous essay about Jack and Jill as the speaker and listener that “grasp the universal viewpoint”¹ and are grasped by it. The claim, made at least implicitly, is and was that if they are to be an adequate audience, **audiens, loquens**,² then they are to be firmly “in the position,”³ occasionally even together in the **poisition**.⁴

The core of the problem that emerges is what might be called my optimism. Let me tidy this up a little. First, what I am optimistic about? I am optimistic that in the third stage - and fourth stage - of meaning, the community of the Tower will reach a level of communicating that is positional and, at its best, poisitional. Especially,

¹*Insight* 580[602]. It is best to repeat the sentence that was the heart of our pointing in the previous SURF. Pure formulations are either the content of single judgments or contexts constituted by more or less coherent aggregates of judgments. “They are pure formulations if they proceed from an interpreter that grasps the universal viewpoint and if they are addressed to an audience that similarly grasps the universal viewpoint”.

²Think in terms of the full matrix, $C_{i,j}$, of the collaborative community. The central collaborative conversation is uni-directional, represented by $C_{x,x+1}$, where x goes from 1 to 8 and $9 = 1$. A specialist is **loquens** and the **audiens** is the specialty that follows in the circuit. But the full 64 elements of the matrix represents conversations in which roles oscillate. Further, there is the particular audiens of Researchers, and the particular loquens of Communications, and there is the general audiens and loquens of the member of the Tower community living with what I call, C_9 , in the Metagram W3.

³*Insight* 413. The basic position is enlarged by the possession of the universal viewpoint, and other auxiliary meanings.

⁴The poisition is a psychic stability in the position that rescues Jack or Jill, you or me, from the sense that “the self of our self-affirmation seems quite different from on’s actual self, the universe of being seems as unreal as Plato’s noetic heaven, and objectivity spontaneously becomes a matter of meeting persons and dealing with things that are ‘already out there’”(*Insight*, 411). This is, at present, a difficult achievement of the solitary thinker: but more of this in the text, where it is part of the main topic.

peculiarly enough, when its conversations are “off track”. I am assuming that you have followed up the few previous footnotes here. Those conversations are of the type represented by $C_{3,6}$, a conversation, then, between a historian and a policy specialist.

I think of the operation here of a definite policy, the one I am, indeed, trying now to establish, whereby in such “off the track” conversations an effort is made precisely to lift the two psyches to the level of what I might as well call now *Towering Darkness*. The ideal, of course, or should I say, the norm, is that conversations of any type within the matrix $C_{j,k}$ are to lean towards this achievement. This includes face-to-face conversations, but it also includes the conversations though print or e-mail. So, to recall the convention that I introduced in the later *Field Nocturnes*, the conversations are luminously **boldfaced**.

Is **thisherenowtherethen conversation boldfaced**? I make an effort as I type to be luminously in the **comeabout** position.⁵ How about you, now reading? It is quite an effort, that is, if you know what I am talking about at all from your experience of “startling strangeness,”⁶ an experience cultivated into habitual recurrence schemes over at least a year or ten.

Before beginning this essay I mused over the possibility of writing at length, once again, of the positional stance. It has been evident to me, since I ventured on the luminous digestion of the last work of Merleau-Ponty, supported by the recent works of Renaud Barbaras, that a lengthy invitation to share that struggle for luminosity would be of benefit to the present generation in its struggle for the ingesting of the position, for the incarnation in themselves of the comeabout stance. But at 77 I have other things to do, so let some middle-aged elder take up the task.

⁵One needs the context here of those later *Field Nocturnes*, where I also introduce the works of Merleau-Ponty and Renaud Barbaras mentioned shortly below in the text. The comeabout stance has been a regular topic of mine in these last years: the key text, “so it comes about” is on *Insight* 514[537].

⁶*Insight*, xxviii[25].

What is pretty evident to me now, though, is that present Lonerganism does not take the challenge of self-positioning at all as seriously as did the dying Merleau-Ponty or his follower Renaud Barbaras. Are you willing to travel through the concluding fragments of the incomplete reaching of Merleau-Ponty, through a parallel meditation on touch, for a position and a position that eluded Merleau-Ponty, and perhaps, still, you? Renaud Barbaras' little book, *Desire and Distance*, takes a stand in the final chapter of the presence of Renaud to Renaud as⁷ desire, but positioning is beyond his culture. The culture of the Lonergan school offers roads to that positioning, but all too regularly at present they are roads not taken. Too often, for example, I sit in lecture halls knowing and sensing that the speaker, speaking even of the position, is speaking to an already out there sea scene of faces in an already-out-there-now hall.

Let us get back to my optimism and its meaning. My optimism regards the distant Tower, not the present century. How distant, and when might we firmly move to the third stage of meaning which would contextualize that Towering Region of geohistory?

This evidently depends on you and the generations that follow you, where by follow I mean towards luminous self-presence in a degree resonant with talent and commitment. You must note that I talk here of the people of the Tower, the people who live in the world of responsible reflective culture.⁸ What of the people of common sense? Perhaps, in a million years or so. But in the foreseeable future I would go with the notion that for them the already-out-there-now would be a legitimate symbol. Their pragmatic realism is a realism of minding - they are nobody's fool - but their talk of what is real can quite easily be caught in the objectivity of a bus passing noisily by.

Might I be of further help here in bringing this remote policy to conversational

⁷The meaning of *as* is quite tricky: it is not abstractive in the usual sense. The unusual sense is present in Lonergan's *Phenomenology and Logic*, when he discusses subject as subject. See, there, 226, 314-17, 360-65.

⁸I would note that this challenge extends to the worlds of poetry, music, architecture etc.

practicality? I would have to pick up where I left off, bring together my various pointers in a fresh way, and invite you forward. But our problem is mainly one of inviting you to begin or perhaps to move forward. You have, perhaps been nudged by the likes of Mark Morelli or Dick Liddy?⁹ What might I add to such nudgings? What might I say, indeed, even in the absence of such nudgings?

Once again, I add a cut-off line here and delete the more complex considerations that were emerging. At all events these complex considerations would involve, for the most part, compactings of previous nudgings regarding the cultivation of the position and the position.¹⁰ What is necessary at present is the more elementary effort to collaborate in a minimalist way that would share with people of any view the benefits of a functional collaboration.

⁹Richard Liddy's has various presentations regarding "Startling Strangeness" as well as the book of that title; the main Morelli work I have in mind here is his pointers in "Going Beyond Idealism. Lonergan's Relation to Hegel," *Lonergan Workshop*, vol. 20, 2008, but I would also draw attention to his very suggestive book regarding Lonergan, Stewart and Plato, *At the Threshold of the Halfway House. A Study of Bernard Lonergan's Encounter with John Alexander Stewart*, Boston College Lonergan Institute, 2007.

¹⁰My first treatment of the position, *Philosophic Studies* (Ireland) 1962, focused on the subtle manner in which Lonergan moved to it in *Insight. Wealth of Self*, chapter 5 enlarges on a particular aspect of that, as does chapter 5 of *A Brief History of Tongue*. Cantower 9 talks of the position as it twines with the position.