

THE INTERIOR LIGHTHOUSE ZERO

This should have been the essay titled “Interior Lighthouse III,”¹ but it seems necessary to move back to simpler pointings rather than forward to advances in the road of which I write. There are those who have difficulty with my approach, especially among what I may call professional students of what are known as *apophatic* and *kataphatic* types of contemplation. I am not going to venture into the works of such students apart from pointing to the work mentioned in note 2 below as a helpful background,² so hang in with me as I try to present my view on styles of contemplation in a simple manner.³ Certainly don’t let the two words *apophatic* and *kataphatic* put you off: indeed they may help you on.

¹ “The Interior Lighthouse I” is the essay of the website, [HOW 13](#). “Interior Lighthouse II” was integrated into the essay, [Disputing Quests 12](#), “Interior Lighthouse: *Insight* and Futurology,” which appears in *Divyadaan* 28/3 (2017).

² Harvey Egan, “Christian Apophatic and Kataphatic Mysticism,” *Theological Studies*, XXXIX (1978), 399–426. Egan taught a Boston College while Lonergan was there: you can easily track his abundant writings on these subjects. Then, take the next note seriously and struggle to see how we all stand in this transition period of history.

³ “simple manner” perhaps brings a smile for those who know the climb involved in this piece, this peace, of the puzzle that is me and you. I hardly need to recall Lonergan’s story of 1961 about the person who wanted Einstein to explain relativity theory over tea. *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* (Axial Publishing, 2016) drives, cajoles, forces (*Insight*, 423, line 4) towards a glimpse that “**what** is lacking knowledge all that is lacking” (*Ibid.*, 559) by suspecting contemplatively – an ontic and phyletic challenge, respectively, of decades and millennia – that initial meaning is our present axial home in all but the lowest and simplest science. G_{jk}ⁱ (see, on my website, [HOW 5](#), “Searching for Avila, John, Jesus, Stein, *Moi Intime*, Etc. Etc.” at notes 82, 106, 142, 89, and the text at note 91) symbolizes that lowliness in our lame kataphatic talk of God. But I am writing here and now with a precision way beyond that of the book *Allure*. What more can I say? I am brief here about new precisions to the *HOW 5* essay of over fifty pages referred to above in this note. There is a long phyletic climb ahead to a sunflower stem-cell genetic light on our darkness, an illumination of our apophatic phatisms that is to ground us globally in a kataphatic poise that “sweeps living human bodies, linked together in charity, to the joyous, courageous, whole-hearted, yet intelligently controlled performance of the tasks set by world order in which the problem of evil is not suppressed but transcended” (*Insight*, 745). Am I writing anything new here? “To speak of the dynamic state of being in love with God pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of interiority has been made the explicit grounds of the worlds of theory and common sense” (*Method in Theology*, 107). Human studies are nowhere near that ballpark of “accepting the ultimate implications of the unrestricted desire” (*Insight*, 766) in cinema, bedroom, game-park, government or slum.

Think of them as pointing to two extremes in contemplative preference or poise, characterized by their relations to **talk**. *Phatic* is an English adjective which relates to talk as skimpily connective, like a shout or a hello: it comes from the Greek *phatos*, spoken. Then you prefix *phatic* with the two opposites *apo*—“away from”—and *kata* —“down to”—and you get to the two extremes that I am writing about.

It is useful to deviate immediately and at some length into another topic, the topic of beauty. There are two extreme poises in front of a sculpting or a song. One can be awestruck, and perhaps minimally phatic: “wow!”⁴ But one can be kataphatic about the particular splendor: talk becomes possible or necessary, talk that is fresh perhaps or quite habitual; and there is talk that is a searcher’s talk.⁵

Here you and I must seriously pause. Various useful twists occurred to me, twists to help us along, to help us long, in the long run, riverrun, perhaps alone.⁶ But it seemed best to hold to brevity and to ask you to stay with my deviation: we are talking about contemplating a work of art: con-temple-ing, turning it into a sanctuary, finding it a sanctuary, finding that,

⁴ I bring you towards the heart of the matter here and in the following note 5. Note 3 is the climbing context, the ingesting of the challenge of the katapophatic poise, a life climb, pilgrim and eschatonic. The topic is massive but perhaps the quoting of note 38 of [Disputing Quests 12](#): “Interior Lighthouse II: Insight and Futurology” would help: “A mature contemplative stance requires the slow luminous ingesting of analogical thinking, of the poise that (1) affirms the Beyondness’s reachability :they are persons, ‘just like us’ ; see *Insight*, 691; (2) denies the reachability (*Insight*, 706-8) and, (3) glimpses contemplatively e.g. the utterly glorious remoteness of the “absolutely supernatural” (*Insight*, 747, line 10: have you felt the shock of the shift to there from line 9?).”

⁵ Obviously, I am pointing here to the norm of the talk on *Insight* of the searcher Lonergan. The book referred to after note 7 in the text is my most recent effort to mesh that talk with his later climbing. The next note, 6, points to facets of our sharing of that climb.

⁶ There is a twist above round Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* that recalls the mid-section of the previous [Disputing Quests 12](#). There might have been a valuable turn around his early *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, with its pause on Thomas’s view of beauty and the personal problem of “winning the cigar.” Eventually, I decided to cut back from such twists and turns about ontic and phyletic survival and poise us simply over Lonergan and our own possible challenge of moving towards becoming similarly odd. Lonergan’s climb was massively alone, living as an evolutionary sport, ending as “a man on giant stilts” (Recalling Proust’s conclusion to *Remembrance of Times Past*). The climb is described in Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas* (Axial Publishing, 2010). His climb was, in my new term, *katapophatic*: and very hidden. In so far as you pick up on his leads and clues, and those leads and clues remain in the hands of a shrunken Lonerganism, you too must travel as an evolutionary sport. But the riverrun will increasingly poise you-as-subject, secondary intelligible, in the subjectivity of God’s tripersonal concern (See *Insight*, 683, “In the fourteenth place” and *Allure*, 233, concluding 9 lines).

inarticulate in its presence, “it is well with my soul.”⁷ The reference there is to the beginning of chapter 19 of my Book *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, with title “The Well of Loneliness.” But still, I do not wish you to take, so to speak, a religious turn, where piety can too easily become a *persona* poise. Rather I wish you to pick up on the drift of the end of the third page of that 19th chapter, where I associate its questing with the question of cosmopolis.

“[W]hat is Cosmopolis? Like every other object of human intelligence, it is in the first instance an *X*, what is to be known when one understands.”⁸

Might I whimsically call it an *X*-Factor?

As it happens, my wife, Reverend Sally, and I spent some hours last night screening through the world’s talent shows, arena’s filled with whats. Britain’s Got Talent, but so does Russia and Australia. Has Cosmopolis Got Talent?

The well of loneliness radiates, in these shows, through the performances and the responses.⁹ In that radiation one finds sanctuary. One is within sanctuary. One is reached by sanctuary, conned by sanctuary, con-templated, con-templated contemplative.

You find sanctuary: sometimes all the more so in a surprise of excellence where the first impression of the performer is of shabby self-deceit.

How can these diverse “talent” audiences be thus conned? What is their common weakness or talent? Yes, indeed: what is their common talent.

The emergence of humanity is the evolutionary achievement of sowing what among the cosmic molecules. The sown what infests the clustered molecular patterns behind and above your eyes, between your ears, lifting areas – named by humans like Brocca and Wernicke – towards patterned noise-making that in English is marked by “so what?”¹⁰

The performer did not sow what, but seeded what, and what con-seeded spontaneously, be that the what of an expert in the front, or the what of a senior or a junior in the gallery. A

⁷ I am quoting the 1873 hymn of that title by Horatio Spafford. Perhaps the whole first verse is worth recalling: “When peace like a river attendeth my way, / When sorrow like sea billows roll, / Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to know, / It is well, it is well with my soul” (*know* ends line 3, as originally written: *say* occurs there in hymnbooks).

⁸ *Insight*, 263.

⁹ *Allure*, 225–6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

globally-shared what has been released, has been freed,¹¹ has been friended. The arena or theatre walls off these whats from the massively sick unfriendliness that holds whats in a global bondage of immaturity, stupidity, malice. Yet, paradoxically, what is this bondage: what emerging and evolving in a fragility¹² of not-knowing what and not-knowing molecules.

But we had best not diverge here into those deeper problems of what: we are paused now in the memory of a moment of sanctuary. Are we not paused thus, now, in contemplating that contemplation? What is it? What is it all about? What it is, about all about.

Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness
To be conscious is not to be in time
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden
the moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
the moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time is time conquered.¹³

Only through time is time conquered: indeed! What can escape and escapade only through millennia of lifting the dark bright moments luminously into the heart of whatness, of whatness. Is it not time to begin the escapade of escape?

The anaphatic what-sanctuary is in the primitive dance and song, an opaque global flickering of what's stumbling evolution. It finds locations in theatres and totems, yet, paradoxically, from such locating so so slowly sensing the kataphatic gap: the need to move from stray stumbling to steady stability of what-joy.

¹¹ It is difficult to resist reaching back into the past of the phaticism, free, to the not-in-bondage *free* of old English: noble, glad, illustrious; thus echoing the indoeuropean base, *prei-*, with its Sanskrit root *priya-* pointing to 'desired, friend'.

¹² I am skipping over questions of the graceful character of this fragility. Such questions are to be weaved into the meaning of *Clasping* in the fundamental prayer that hovers round the diagram W₃: "Double You Three in me, in all, Clasping, Cherishing, Cauling, Craving, Christing." That prayer weaves into kataphatic attitude the rise to explanation – with concomitant molecularization (a sublation involved here of Thomas IIaIIae, q.180, a.1) – beyond the descriptive-like end (chapter 6) of CWL 12, *The Triune God: Systematics*.

¹³ From *Burnt Norton* of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*.

Are you a little bewildered now? We began, perhaps, with a moment of sanctuary, of seeming clarity. The global flickering that lives on is named apophatic. The kataphatic, then? One can somehow talk out the anaphatic. But: what talk? What-talk. What-talk that slimly names. Might we not do better? Might we move from this scene of stumbling, easily destructive, to a stability of what-joy? The scene is the negative Anthropocene: the scene that needs seeding is the distant positive Anthropocene.

That new scene is to be seeded by some such a climb as *Insight* invites. Then there will emerge self-luminous speech in and about contemplation.

Such speech, however, is found clear and accurate and explanatory only by those who have done their apprenticeship. It is not enough to have acquired common sense and to speak ordinary language . . . with . . . the permanent risk it runs of merging with common nonsense. To say it all with the greatest brevity: one has not only to read *Insight* but also to discover oneself in oneself.¹⁴

So, we arrive back at, or forward to, *Insight* as a contemplative challenge. We arrive at the searchings of the Harvey Egan and the Dogen Zenjis¹⁵ to see a little better their global inadequacies. Perhaps the better-seeing is helped by specifying that arrival back or forward here and now in terms of a contemplation of a single paragraph of *Insight*, in which the singer Lonergan ends his crazy lonesome searching song.¹⁶

The explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being involves three elements. First, there is the genetic sequence in which insights gradually are accumulated by man. Secondly, there are the dialectic alternatives in which accumulated insights are formulated, with positions inviting further development and counterpositions shifting their ground to avoid the reversal they demand. Thirdly, with the advance of culture and effective education,

¹⁴ *Method in Theology*, 260.

¹⁵ See note 2 above for reference to Harvey Egan. Dogen Zenji's great work, *Shobogenzo*, (translated in four volumes by Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens, Kawata Press, Tokyo, 1975) figures in the third edition of my 1968 effort to promote kataphatic prayer, *Music That Is Soundless. A Fine Tuning for the Lonely Bud A* (Axial Publishing, 2005). A context for the present reflections is provided by my five essays on "Foundational Prayer", [Prebuous 4–8](#).

¹⁶ "Here I am eccentric enough to compare Lonergan's effort with Donizetti's, indeed to compare *Insight* with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. There is the 'mad scene' near the end of the Opera which I like to compare with the madness of Lonergan's treatment of interpretation near the end of his Opus. Lonergan's madness, the heart of his new view, remained unsung throughout the twentieth century." [FuSe Zero](#), "A Simple Appeal for Functional Collaboration," at page 8. The text of *FuSe Zero* continues on the topic.

there arises the possibility of the differentiation and specialization of modes of expression, and since this development conditions not only the exact communication of insights but also the discoverer's own grasp of his discovery, since such grasp and its exact communication intimately are connected with the advance of positions and the reversal of counterpositions, the three elements in the explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being fuse into a single explanation.¹⁷

Is it not magnificent, enthralling? Might we not add to an apophatic joy a katapophatic repentance¹⁸ that would shift us from chatting about Teresa of Avila or Meister Eckhart to bringing our battered what-shots into the stem of a sunflower of history?

¹⁷ *Insight*, 609–10.

¹⁸ See Philip McShane, “*Insight* and the Interior Lighthouse: 2020-2050,” *Diyadaan* **28**/2 (2017), where I discuss the various mentions of repentance on page 722 of *Insight*.