

“A DRAMATIC INSTANCE”

On we go now with twirls of imagination around the genetic perspective introduced in the first and second essays.¹ The heading above, you may have recognized, comes from the first page of *Insight*'s first chapter. It is the Archimedes illustration, and the page ends with Archimedes' leap. Indeed, the last line ends: “Weight the crown in water. Im-”² and we have the usual page-turning problem.³ What comes next? Might it be “Im-perial,” “Im-printed”? Both words would suit our venture, for we are heading, just now, into musings about political structures and neurodynamic disorientations. *Imperial*, then, could lead us forward in odd ways: there is the crown of government, and the imperial is a present disease of, say, North Korea or Putin's Russia. I would have you weigh that disease as Helen Keller weighed Annie Sullivan's five-signed spelling of *water*.⁴

But what of imprinting? I quote my Webster Dictionary on the topic. “A learning mechanism operating very early in the life of an animal, in which a particular stimulus immediately establishes an irreversible behavior pattern with reference to the same stimulus in the future.” So, there is another disease, the supposed—imprinted?—wondrous right of

¹ The issue of imagination and fantasy is, I suspect, to haunt our efforts to push forward into the “conception, affirmation and implementation of the integral heuristic structure of” (*Insight*, 416) interpretation. See especially the pointers below in notes 22 and 30. There is the tremendous challenge of envisaging a multidisciplinary and global cyclic futurology that is Bell-curve effective. Perhaps the haunting had best be turned towards the methodological fantasy involved, “an elimination of the chasm or gap between intellect and the senses. . . . There must be developed, therefore, a psychology of the ‘incarnate spirit’; a theory of the pictorial and plastic arts, of music and literature; a theory of the primitive, the mythic, the popular, and the semi-educated mentality.” “Introduction to the Notion and Problem of Method,” *Early Works on Theological Method* 2, CWL 23, 635.

² *Insight*, 27.

³ On the psychology of page turning, see [Disputing Quests 18](#), “Seeding the Future,” especially the pointing towards scientific poise in note 4. It is the poise generally, and most damagingly, missing in approaches to chapter 17 of *Insight*.

⁴ “The moment of language in human discover is most strikingly illustrated by the story of Helen Keller's discovery” (*Method in Theology*, 70). I spell out an invitation to discover that discovery in *A Brief History of Tongue: From Big Bang to Coloured Wholes* (Axial Publishing, 1998) 31–36.

present democracy to vote every few years. How many of us live numbly in this watered-down version of, say, Plato's poise regarding citizens? I do not wish to carry on my thin punning here, but there is a sad laugh to be had from musing about the top line of the second page of *Insight's* first chapter, about "the principles of displacement and of specific gravity" in the hydrostatics and amygdalic entrapments of our global political structures.⁵

Some of my readers are no doubt well versed in political theory: Lonergan readers may have added an ethos of Voegelin's climb to his considerations of *The Ecumenic Age*, even weaving forward from his view of ancient China to the present strange structure of Marxist China. But here my "practical insight *F*"⁶ is poised in "a grasp *D* of the deficiencies in insight *E* that have to be overcome if the insight *A* is to be communicated."⁷ I am addressing the commonsense of my audience that, perhaps, gives little attention to patterns of local or global government—even if they are professors of political science—so they live in the psychodynamics of a deficient insight *E* regarding the way things are, the way things might be. Pause your self here now, so that "satire breaks in upon the busy day,"⁸ as you LOL or at least grin, when I tell you that a serious piece of the insight *A* to be communicated is what I call "Amendment *A*": a positive answer to my question, "do you view humanity as possibly maturing—in some serious way—or just messing along between good and evil, whatever you think they are?"⁹

But it is the first step towards that viewing, a viewing of viewing, which is our immediate interest.

Recall, then, our first little essay where we reached for a laugh about Lonergan's title to page 156 of *Method in Theology*: "Understanding the Object." The object here is humanity's

⁵ A context I recommend in order to glimpse Lonergan's early struggles with this area is represented by the essay referred to below, in note 16.

⁶ *Insight*, 585.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Insight*, 649.

⁹ Philip McShane, [*Profit. The Stupid View of President Donald Trump*](#) (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2016), 85. The footnote there adds the naming *Amendment A* and continues: "adds a note of concrete fantasy to present shrunken formulations of humanity's right road."

right road.¹⁰ Have you a sense of “all that is lacking”¹¹ in the understanding of that object? Well, enough sense to line up the various answers, perhaps even in a songster’s line-up?¹²

But let’s keep to the simplicity of the suggestion of *Interpretation 1*: so we focus on the more thoughtful answers, and line them up, as best we can, in some genetics of improving answers. Are we in the shadow of a course on political studies? The notion of improving answers shakes that up. So, for instance, our present voting view of democracy might well settle in with the pebble-voting of ancient Greece. The genetic line-up is a tricky business.¹³ But the deep trouble is seeded by my meaning of *Amendment A*, a trouble which ties in with the problem of “*The Genesis of Adequate Self-knowledge*.”¹⁴ The trickiness is akin to Annie Sullivan’s problem of hand-honking Helen for five weeks before Helen jumps out of the dark. Helen was impatient because she did not know the leap to the light. Do you know, in some way, advantaged beyond Helen?¹⁵

Think of the genetics of the sunflower: had you never met a sunflower, or even a plant, a ground-breaking sprig of green would give no notion of the later Big Smile. Similarly, a tadpole would be only a little fish; and a young butterfly . . . ?! And here, I would have you

¹⁰ I would note my present strategy in regard to Lonerganism. Our effort to incarnate his second canon of hermeneutics is pivotal in lifting us all forwards into the right road there of the positive Anthropocene. See also note 18 below.

¹¹ *Insight*, 559. This really, is a rhetorical question, is it not? “[I]he greater the novelty the less prepared the audience.” (*Insight*, 612). Lonergan’s hermeneutic heuristic is uniquely and massively novel. See the final note of this essay.

¹² I was nudged here by recalling the songs of Sinéad O’Connor that I built into the final chapter of [Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry](#). What is behind such weaving? Recall note 1 above.

¹³ At note 10 of the previous essay I quoted Lonergan’s central nudge regarding genetic ordering – the nudge from the history of mathematics. That nudge in “Understanding and Method,” (1959), in *Early Works on Theological Method 2*, CWL 23, 3–229, at pages 175–177, is a high point of clarity in a heavy struggle with method and the quest for system. (The work quoted from the same volume at note 1 seems to be a later twist on that same effort). There are, for example, tricky pointers about reversal (117, 139, and 167) that need to be developed and illustrated. There is the haunting problem of “the chasm” mentioned above in note 1, and the point made about it in the concluding page. “There is no solution to the problem of the chasm if, having made the transition from one mode of apprehension to the other, one no longer returns to the first one; but there is if one sees the close connection between the systematic and the intersubjective modes of apprehension.” (227)

¹⁴ *Insight*, 558. It is the title of section 1.2 of the chapter on “Metaphysics as Dialectic.”

¹⁵ We are trying to leap into the light, committedly, of a new self-luminosity: we have a present pre-dawn neurodynamic which is, literally, more informed than the child Helen’s neuro-anticipation was. What is that informing? That question weaves round points made in notes 1 and 13.

knowte, I am saying nothing of weeds, or poisoned water, or foul air, or predators. “The falseness that is in men’s minds seeks to be made consistent with the truth that they possess and the process inevitably ends with the falsification of all that is true.”¹⁶ Our neurochemistry is fogged by filth in this longer cycle of decline that is the negative Anthropocene. So, even the minding of Jesus’ mission is still a darkened hope-scratch.

But you and I, here and there, can push on in a fantasy about the positive Anthropocene. I pause now, recalling a previous effort to nudge, titled *The Notion of Survival*.¹⁷ The chapter was recommended in the seventies by Lonergan to one of my elder colleagues, much to the elder’s surprise expressed when he told me about it, but certainly not to mine—but I doubt if the elder got round to a serious read of it. I was at the time struggling with the heuristics of what I called there *microautonomy*, a massive shift in global culture mediated by a generalized empirical economics.¹⁸ Forty-five years later it is a much more refined mibox heuristic, symbolized in envisaging the 10th millennium community of a Leaning Tower of Able—one fortieth of the global population—spinning its wealth of selves into the neurodynamics of the globe. That tenth and final chapter ended with the claim that “you are larger than the Red Square, taller than Manhattan, deeper than galactic space. Not to contemplate that aspirative universe within is much more than a sorry personal loss.”¹⁹ The character of the contemplation and the fulfillment of the aspiration are now a clearer piece of the full genetic heuristics. But can you poise yourself psychically like the bewildered Helen in her five dark weeks, to find out how to weigh the crown in water? In What-tiered? In W-treed?²⁰

The climb is more likely to be, not five dark weeks, but five years of scrawny dawning. Here we have a deeper problem of poise for which we have help from the poise of my class

¹⁶ Lonergan, “Essay in Fundamental Sociology,” *Lonergan’s Early Economic Research*, Michael Shute (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 31.

¹⁷ This is the title to the tenth and final chapter of the 1974 book [*Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations: Self-Axis of the Great Ascent*](#).

¹⁸ Recall note 10. The shift from alchemical economics to its science is to be a blossom-discontinuity in our move forward.

¹⁹ *Wealth of Self*, 95–96.

²⁰ In a fuller incarnated thematic and symbolization of W₃? Think of the remote integral reach mentioned in notes, 1, 13, 15.

of 1959–60 written of in the first essay of the series. The climb of that class was towards what is called the *Standard Model*, and there was no problem in their²¹ psychic acceptance of it being a five-year task, each year an acceleration of light and achievement and competence. I recall now moving in autumn of 1960 from that teaching to being a student of theology. There was no equivalent poise: its absence symbolized for me in the sad fact that years 2, 3, and 4 of the students of theology were grouped together in class: was there no distinguishing climbings of the subgroups? Was it a matter of common sense patching into its competence new words for an old-time religion? And, please, let there be no complexification of images or terminologies!²² Weigh the crown imprintingly: and this is true, indeed, whether it is the study of the crown of politics or of the crown of thorns. So we meet the problem of “*genera litteraria*,”²³ of “Levels and Sequences of Expression,”²⁴ and we find that the most significant block and “the most significant elements in the theory of types of expression will be the operators.”²⁵ At present the neuro-sick and what-crippled operators.

We have re-arrived at an earlier problem, the problem of “a grasp *D* of the deficiencies in insight *E* that have to be overcome if the insight *A* is to be communicated.” It is my problem but obviously, too, yours, if you are a committed part of my audience. You wish to grasp the insight *A* in its genetic relevance? Then you need to grapple with, be helped out of,

²¹ “their” refers, of course, to my class of 1959–60, with our intersubjective resonances that pivoted on my stand against disoriented *haute vulgarization*. I have viewed videos of Feynman’s brilliant lectures of a few years later – the three volumes of lectures are readily available – and find the resonances and the poises too colored by the Fontenelle ethos. But this little aside is merely a nudge regarding the larger challenge mentioned in the previous note. It sits within a simpler critique: my detailed demands for exercises was quite different from those of Feynman. It is, of course, just the demand of the first paragraph of *Insight*, chapter one. I must add that Feynman’s third volume differs from the other two in being a great pedagogical effort to break forward from a tradition of unhelpful texts on quantum theory.

²² I made various stabs at terminological support over the decades, e.g. early on in botany and zoology, but the push really begin in the Epilogue, “Being and Loneliness” to [Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations](#) (see page 106). The sentence above expressed Fred Crowe’s attitude, about which we clashed occasionally. He disagreed firmly on this, and on my conviction about the remoteness of human meaning. The problem calls for quite novel ventures both into symbolizations, into the positive and negative neurodynamics of symbolizations, into their crutch-role in our climb towards “the field” (CWL 18, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 199). See [Humus 2](#), “Vis Cogitativa: Contemporary Defective Patterns of Anticipation.”

²³ *Insight*, 595.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 592.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 595.

“the deficiencies in insight *E*.” The deficiencies in insight are a failure to performatively agree with or perhaps to effectively intussuscept Lonergan’s claim about the crowned Jesus. He is writing about getting an adequate scientific grip on the reality of the hypostatic union.

The comprehension of everything in a unified whole can be either formal or virtual. It is virtual when one is habitually able to answer readily and without difficulty, or at least ‘without tears’, a whole series of questions right up to the last why? Formal comprehension, however, cannot take place without a construct of some sort. In this life we are able to understand something only by turning to phantasm; but in larger and more complex questions it is impossible to have suitable phantasm unless the imagination is aided by some sort of diagram. Thus, if we want to have a comprehensive grasp of everything in a unified whole, we shall have to construct a diagram in which are symbolically represented all the various elements of the question along with the connections between them.²⁶

I quoted, on the problem of sensible expression, the title and the conclusion of *Insight* Chapter 17’s section 3.3 above, at note 24. We may, indeed, much later, push on with the wide range of problems in the full zone of expression: the difference between Leonard Cohen’s *Alleluia* and Alleluia in a synagogue reading, between “it is late in the day” and “the day is now far spent” as translations of *Luke* 24:30: etc. etc. But here we have a simpler, more discomfiting focus. “Direct concern with the reader’s understanding appears in scientific writing.”²⁷ Lonergan’s reluctant writing of *CWL* 7 was a shot at scientific writing.²⁸ Was it a successful shot? One might indeed broaden the question and ask about the success of his entire writings and lectures.²⁹ However, we are puttering at an elementary level here, puttering round that troubling third section of *Insight* 17, so let us tighten our discomfiting focus to you and I as now reading the sentence, “direct concern with the reader’s understanding appears in scientific writing.” How do you, did you, read that sentence? It is

²⁶ *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, *CWL* 7, 151.

²⁷ *Insight*, 593.

²⁸ “It was because of teaching obligations that I was led to write the book and not because I had nothing else to do” (*The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, *CWL* 7, 3). My conversations with Lonergan, starting in 1961, revealed what a strange tough business it was handling the task of teaching in the Gregorian University. I paused here to peruse *CWL* 7 again and was sadly amused at his various expressions of a poise way beyond the students. How is all this to fit into a genetic hermeneutics of non-effective and effective meanings?

²⁹ See below, note 34.

600 pages out in a book that is peculiarly scientific about the meanings of *concern*, *understanding*, *scientific*. Are you not, perhaps quietly, perhaps inadvertently till now, in agreement with Fred Crowe?³⁰

What, then, is your reaction to the claim that both that reading adequately and thinking “without tears”³¹ about either the hypostatic union or the genetic sequencing of views requires such symbolization as W_3 ? That reading and thinking otherwise transgresses brutally both of Lonergan’s canons of explanation, and leaves you in a well-informed, even well-intentioned, no-man’s-land.³² The road to the positive Anthropocene is not paved with such intentions. One faces, then, the awkward emergence, on the edge of the positive Anthropocene, of the refining luminosity of the normative poise: “theoretic understanding, then, seeks to solve problems, to erect syntheses, to embrace the universe in a single view.”³³ W_3 , ingested towards effectively helpful differentiated eloquence, is the ground of the success of Amendment A.³⁴

We putter on then, in a shadowland that haunted Lonergan’s expression throughout his life,³⁵ and the puttering is to lead us, not to comprehend Amendment A or its fuller grounding or its genetic blossoming, but to stir us to do something about rescuing the next generations from “the deficiencies in insight *E*.”

³⁰ See note 22 above. See also Patrick Brown’s article, “Interpreting Lonergan’s View of Method in May 1954,” *Seeding Global Collaboration* (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2016), 45–80. The article centers attention on Lonergan’s use of symbolism and Crowe’s request to me for some light on a 1954 letter Lonergan wrote to him. I contributed some pointers in the article.

³¹ See note 26 above.

³² Hints from Lonergan regarding this are in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-64*, CWL 6, 121, 155.

³³ *Insight*, 442.

³⁴ This is a massively complex trail that we may hope to follow later, in some tentative effective heuristic. One key element to notice is a reversal in the order of the grounding of the salvific climb given in *Method in Theology*, chapter 5 section 3. That was the bio-grounding for Lonergan. The geohistorical grounding leans on the recurrence schemes of collaborative needs. See chapter one of [Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations](#).

³⁵ A central key to understanding this dark surround of Lonergan’s expression is a grip on “The Dominant Context of Lonergan’s Life,” chapter 10 of Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas*, (Vancouver: Axial Publishing, 2010), 166–193. It will be a long climb to the communal intussusception and expressive sharing of geohistory of that dark surround, a fulsome effective interpretation of the climbing agony of the words he spoke at the end of his lecture on art in 1959: the dark surround had “done not a little to make human life unlivable.” *Topics in Education*, CWL 10, 232.

How might we prepare ourselves to do that?³⁶

³⁶ See note 11 above. Is this also a rhetorical question? My hope is that it is not. I have spent decades seeking collaboration: seeking an effective recognition of the core of the “all that is lacking” that was tied in with note 11. Do I have even a small interested readership for these first essays on this key pointing of Lonergan towards a thinking adequate, when functionally contextualized, to the positive Anthropocene Age? Are the Lonergan scholars of the three generations after me really happy in continuing their ineffective academic goings-on, including the deeply damaging goings-on of imprinting students?