

THE INTERIOR LIGHTHOUSE III

This is the first mention of the “*Interior Lighthouse* drive” in this series of essays on Interpretation.¹ This essay represents a discomfiting pointing to the shocking reach of Lonergan’s ongoing climb in the 17th chapter of *Insight*. Over the past few years I have talked and written, quite oddly, about the third section of that chapter as paralleling the mad aria in the opera *Lucia de Lammermoor*.² But let that not distract you oddly from the identification of the mad leap in that section that grounds its stumbling-block character for the generations of readers of *Insight* right up to now, Autumn 2017: sixty years after its publication.³ I aim here at being as simple as possible in making the point, knowing that making the point is not at all simple. Indeed, might I not think of this little venture as paralleled by Fermat’s scribble that intrigued and nudged forward the mathematical world for

¹ A first reading of this little essay had best skip the footnotes. The various contexts can be added in the re-runs, re-calls, re-crawls, needed in this millennium to get to where the genius Lonergan was driving his neuromolecules in the hectic summer of 1953, under pressure to wind up that part of his climb of 28 years, his expressing of it in the four-year marathon from 1949, ending with the unbelievable sprinting of those few last months. The primary context this note offers is simply an identification of my work on “The Interior Lighthouse.” There is the first essay in the *HOW* series of over a year ago: [HOW 13](#), “The Interior Lighthouse.” It had been on my mind in the years since I wrote *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History* against the background of Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle*. But the search goes further back, all the way indeed to a precise date, September 7th of 1950, when I was given the wrong lead on contemplation in my first night of a Jesuit novitiate. However, the written pointer of consequence here is the series of five essays on “Foundational Prayer,” of perhaps a decade ago, numbers 4–8 in the [Prehumous](#) series.

² See notes 3 and 4 of [Disputing Quests 18](#), “Seeding the Future”.

³ *Diyadaan. A Journal of Education and Philosophy*, with three volumes each year, celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the publication of *Insight* with two volumes. I have relevant essays in all three volumes, but the one in the second volume **28/2** (2017), has the title, “*Insight* and the Interior Lighthouse: 2020-2050.” There is mention of the “Interior Lighthouse project” but is not pushy about its development. My essay in the third volume has the title “Interior Lighthouse II: *Insight* and Futurology”. It does not contain a development of *HOW 13*: rather, as a central piece, it invites directly an effort of what I now call *kataphatic contemplation*. That essay appears also on the website as [Disputing Quests 12](#). My musing at that stage led me to follow that essay with [Disputing Quests 13](#), “Interior Lighthouse Zero”, a sort of fresh beginning and fresh invitation to the project. What is that project? It seems as well to have another go at identifying it in the present essay. It is properly identified, in an advanced stage—analogue to later pointers of Teresa’s work—as an intussusception, InWithTo, of the final nine words of this essay.

over three centuries?⁴ But better that I think of some of Lonergan's hurried typing of the summer of 1953 as, strangely, in that class: strangely, because the shocking density of Lonergan's pithy pointers have not been noticed.⁵

In the previous three essays I tried for a reasonably simple start on our venture into the problem of interpretation. Two references helped us on our way. Were they helpful, with or without the context that surrounded them? There was the 'funny' of Lonergan talking about the requirement of "understanding the object"⁶ as a piece of the road to interpreting someone's view of it to someone else.⁷ The funny could be handled by thinking of lining up shots at understanding in a sequence, the grasp of the object normally improving with the lining up: here the reference was to Lonergan's chat about lining up mathematical development.⁸ The two references and the way I juggled them seem reasonably sane—do they not?—whether you think of the parallel with the medical team of Dr. House, or think of the trek towards the solution of Fermat's Last Theorem, or think of tracking the meaning of the Epistles of Paul in the *New Testament*.

So, might we not be optimistic about somehow making Lonergan's climb on towards his canons of hermeneutics palatable to our times, and indeed possible, at least to our Lonergan community? Here I must admit to something of that optimism when I tried last year to wake up the Lonergan community to the fact that, prior to facing the issue of

⁴ There are many semi-satisfactory presentations of the story: see, for example, Amir D. Aczel, *Fermat's Last Theorem. Unlocking the Secret of an Ancient Mathematical Problem*, Four Walls Eight Windows, N.Y., 1996. The Result of Andrew Wiles decade-long struggle are available in *Annals of Mathematics*, 142, 1995, 443–551, "Modular Elliptic Curves and Fermat's Last Theorem".

⁵ The sense of the project is, perhaps, helped by the parallel drawn in the previous note. There are the years of phyletic climbing easily dated; there is the ontic climbing of Wiles. However, the analogue is remote from almost all of my readers. On the other hand, pausing over another pithy dense pointing of Lonergan could help. Think, then—what an odd and wonderful word is *then!*—of the seven words of *Insight* 621, "Will, then, is intellectual or spiritual appetite." How is one to intussuscept Lonergan's meaning? So, in your seriousness, you find your way to the full context in Thomas' 3-part *Summa* of the neat little 50-page package of "sixty three articles in a row" (*Grace and Freedom*, CWL 1, 94). In doing so, you shake off a great deal of a mythology about the later Lonergan. But now you may rise to ask contemplatively, where is the context and the package for the slow phyletic and ontic climb to an effective relevant meaning of *historical sense*?

⁶ *Method in Theology*, 156.

⁷ This was the focus of [Interpretation 1](#), "A Fresh Start."

⁸ The text concludes [Interpretation 2](#), "Some Contexts of the Interpretation Series."

functional collaboration on which there is a clear disagreement between myself and my elder colleagues, there is the issue of facing the pre-functional challenge of a paragraph from the canons of hermeneutics in *Insight*, the paragraph that I name 60910. Perhaps it is as well to repeat that challenge here, but now read with a twinkle in your eye, as you should have read the beginning of the final paragraph of *Insight* chapter 5, “The answer is easily reached,”⁹ a paragraph that indeed haunts our present problem. At all events, on we go with my unheard challenge of 2016 to the Lonergan community: was it pretense or humbug? Well, it is something of a laugh, the more so when one gets a grip on how Lonergan’s pithy pointer—it ends this essay—slides quietly past the eye in the middle of *Insight* chapter 17. “Proofless, purposeless laughter can dissolve honored pretense; it can disrupt conventional humbug.” Off we go now, Tom, Dick and Mary, remembering last year’s folly!

Report submitted by Philip McShane for the June 25th Boston Meeting, 2016.

I send this report as a private person, although I am included in the SGEME report: perhaps being senior Lonergan scholar and editor of some of his trickiest works are grounds for an allowance for this exception?

The report concerns a dismal failure needing a serious discussion. We have all failed to take the challenge of Lonergan’s canons of hermeneutics seriously: instead we putter along in the mode of “academic disciplines” (*Method*, end of the first page of chapter one), condemned by Lonergan on the next page of *Method*. The leadership leads in the stale outdated way. Doran swoops thus on *CWL* 11 and 12; Lawrence sweeps thus through German thinkers; McShane swaps thus one discipline for another repeatedly without tackling the genetic hermeneutics of any; etc. etc. Is it not time that we paused to be effectively embarrassed by a central doctrine? [“Doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company” *Method*, 299] The embarrassment is in finding ourselves among those mentioned by Lonergan on *Insight* 604, in the flow of presenting his view of the needed serious science of interpretation. Being diligent and specialized is not enough.

“One may expect the diligent authors of highly specialized monographs to be somewhat bewildered and dismayed when they find that instead of singly following the bent of their genius, their aptitudes, and their acquired skills, they are to collaborate in the light of abstruse principles and to have their

⁹ *Insight*, 195.

individual results checked by general requirements that envisage simultaneously the totality of results.”

The issue, the central doctrine we have dodged, is the emergence, across the board, of genetic systematics, an emergence packed into the genius paragraph (*Insight*, 609–10) of the second canon of hermeneutics:

“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, 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 is 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.”

I note, in conclusion, first, that the point is made clearly in my two-page essay [HOW 6](#), “The Pullet’s Surprise”; secondly, that the issue I raise is not one of functional collaboration, but of a blatant dodging of Lonergan’s pointers, in *Insight*, regarding genetic development.

LOL, yes: but does it not seem a plausible request? If we can’t agree on trying out functional collaboration, surely we can agree that we dodged this earlier challenge, and that a shot at it is worthwhile? But are we effectively up to this shot, are we effectively free to do this apparently neat little shift that would lift, say, interpreting Paul into a genetic context? And if we are not, does it not nudge us to a fresh take on the climb of *Insight* and its “blueprints of Utopia”?¹⁰ Might not humor or satire sober us all up, lead us to look cheerily back on the learned musings about *Insight* of the past 60 years, so as to snail them rather than, wow, “hurry them to their destiny of bringing about their own reversal”?¹¹ Are we really sniffing the universal viewpoint in any serious way better than ancient Lucy swinging carelessly in the branches of being so as to take a fall? “As satire can help man swing out of the self-centeredness of the animal in a habitat to the universal viewpoint of an intelligent

¹⁰ *Insight*, 649.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

and reasonable being, so humor can aid him to the discovery of the complex problem of grasping and holding the nettle of a restricted effective freedom.”¹²

What is that complex problem, fermenting in our cruel malicious times? So we come to the dense pithy pointing of Lonergan, half way through *Insight* chapter 17. It is fifty pages beyond his self-objectifying failed invitation aimed at contemporary readers’ contemplative “come about.”¹³ So, obviously, it can be slipped over so easily in a first or fortieth read of chapter 17, leaving us wondering, or not even wondering, why Lonergan’s view has not given us a poise that leads us effectively “to include every valid conclusion of human science”¹⁴ in our global reaching for history’s blossoming.

So there is the pithy pointing to the complex problem that is the pointing towards a challenge of katapophatic contemplation of this next millennium: intussuscepting the gap and the connection between that push of fifty pages earlier and the pithy scream of the following nine words:

“analogous to common sense there is a historical sense.”¹⁵

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Insight*, 537.

¹⁴ *Insight*, 617: the conclusion of chapter 17.

¹⁵ *Insight*, 587.