

Prehumous 7:

Foundational Prayer IV: Positional Nomology and the Heart of Jesus.

Despite the complex and strange title, this is a short essay that aims at being helpful for beginners. My original intention went way beyond that, towards a full heuristic axiomatics that nonetheless had everything to do with the *Logos*. But that would have been, for many, a solid block to our present dialogue about foundational prayer. So I aim here at giving pointers that I hope, will help some forward in foundational prayer. By giving pointers I mean that this essay is not pedagogical but doctrinal. The pedagogy of each short section to follow would require a book, or a year trekking together as in a good, Zenlike, university course.

The first section here rests on an analogy with teaching and learning good introductory physics. Such an introduction benefits both teacher and students by reaching ahead inspirationally: where is this going? It resembles *haute vulgarization* but seeks to be a redemption of that distortion of consciousness, lifting the working group towards the delicate balance of mystery and understanding. The question, What, then, is the heart of physics becomes here, What, then, is the Heart of Jesus?

The second section goes to the positional heart of *Insight*, recalling a much earlier effort of mine to identify this, and pointing towards the possibility of a fundamental positional poise.

The third section pushes for refinements of that poise, but briefly, doctrinally, incompletely. It is very unfamiliar territory for anyone who seeks to follow Lonergan's pointers, much less for beginners. After much musing, including even the sketching of a fourth section on fuller leads, it seemed to me wiser to halt abruptly, with this section three, at what is scarcely more than a mention of axioms of intentionality, infinity and incompleteness which are eventually - "in a hundred years or so"¹ - to be part of the

¹The phrase is from a poem, "If ever you go to Dublin Town" by Patrick Kavanagh. The poem/song begins "If ever you go to Dublin Town / In a hundred years or so". I used this

operative consciousness of The Tower People.

What seems necessary now, following my odd musings on dark nights here, is some light on related issues of mysticism: to these I turn in the following *Prehumous*.

1. What, then, is the Heart of Jesus?

Of course, you can and may ask Him yourself, and this suggestion may give you a nudge towards a type of foundational prayer of the third stage of meaning. The metagram W3 includes “3P”, and there is the mysterious mutual mediation of you and Jesus that is a glorious central mystery of history’s weave around you both as lovers. A week ago I thought of attempting such a dialogue in a “Foundational Prayer VI”, but it may go no further than the beginning, which moved forward thus:

“How am I to speak to You, Second Creative Person of the All? I hold in dark joy that my speaking is within Your Spokenness. You are the Foundational Core of the cycle of searching in history.”

It goes no further because it seems to me that what is desperately needed is the encouragement of beginners: later generations will finish such foundational praying, to be shared in the Tower of Able, to be shared with those of mystic bent as a corrective core of their openness.

But is not this strange beginning of the section already an encouragement? How could one talk to Jesus about an inner word, calling forth refined charity, unless the inner word be luminously there in some seed state, climbed towards through decades of a dark night of sensing and of minding? To the questing of such dark nights we turn elementarily in the next section. But what is the inner word that is a speaking about speaking? “My speaking is within your spokenness”. One needs to have taken Gospel John and medieval Thomas very seriously to be possessed by the inner word and its possession of our gifted willingness. Or one needs to take the prayer book written by

recurrent theme of Kavanagh to establish the mood of the work, *Loneragan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*.

Lonergan, *The Systematic Trinity*, very seriously and to heart.² That heart-holding is a tower vocation, a standard model for living within future theology.

But let us return to the title-question of this section.

It is not, in its fullest reach, a beginner's question, no more than the question that it echoes is, the question raised in chapter 19 of *Insight*: "What, then, is being?"³ If one had climbed - and how slow and strenuous a climb it is - up through the previous chapters of *Insight* to become a come-about⁴ person, THEN one is existentially, molecularly, in the real world, and your praying self, poised in a control of extroversion, is mindful of the presence in esca-history of the organism that is Jesus, "exhibited to our senses" as we flex our neurons round the Galilean story.

In so far as one thus moves freshly through such exercises as, for example, Ignatius sketches, one comes to a "Contemplation for Obtaining Love"⁵ that is quite other than what Ignatius was about. One is - and how obviously community is needed here - in a luminous darkness about the order that is the Practical Word, "Let there be Light,"⁶ and about "that order's dynamic joy and zeal."⁷ Yet that luminous darkness is to be a rich mediation of the lonely searchings of all organisms, lifting each and all of us to the longer cycle of incline in which there are "constructed the flexible circle of

²It seems appropriate to recall my own luck, *fortuna*, here. My copy of that book, signed by Lonergan, came to me more that 40 years ago. It is now the most battered falling-apart book in my possession.

³*Insight*, 642[665].

⁴The phrase, "come about" calls to mind my regular reference to the passage in *Insight* on page 514[537] that briefly and bluntly describes the psychic orientation of the mature metaphysician.

⁵The title of the final exercise in the Ignatian *Exercises*.

⁶It is useful to place this reach in the context of the final section on the Scripture of light and darkness in Lonergan, *De Deo Trino I, Pars Doctrinalis*, Gregorian University, 1964.

⁷*Insight* 700[722].

schemes of recurrence in which the organism functions.”⁸ The construction is to be a mighty effort of future fantasy, and the liberated organism is any organism, swimming sperm or whale, but here we have been thinking primarily, have we not, about the functioning of the organism that is Jesus?

2. Dark nights of senses and of mindings

I am placing the end section of *Prehumous 2* - as I promised there - in a fresh context. And so we find ourselves in the less remote zone of beginners. That end section, on **W0**, was dominated by my mode of presenting the problem to young ladies in a first year course on Meaning. In that reflection on **W0** I referred, by memory of over forty years ago, to directives about this beginners’ problem of “the startling strangeness” given in an article of 1962. Surprisingly, someone sent the article to me in the past month: I had not seen it for forty years.

So it seems useful to give a piece from it, as nudges towards getting one’s self-grip on the two generic dark nights.

I focus on a dark night of minding: the self-blossoming that occurs on our psychic skin when we “**is?, is!, is.**” The brief doctrinal statement of 1961 has been supplemented since by the helpful exercises of *Wealth of Self*, chapter 6 and *A Brief History of Tongue* chapter 5. These helpful exercises should be a part of beginners’ efforts but I do not find them in the Lonergan literature that homes in on “is” or “startling strangeness” or illusions about the “already out there now real”. Is it that teachers and students think this stuff is obvious? I do not find it so, but I do not wish to enlarge on that here: the topic could come up better in a larger later context of reflection on the ineffable. At all events, here is a doctrinal pointing of 1961:

“In *Insight* there is a large scale strategic shift of the critical problem from 'that we know' to 'what we know', from the quest for certitude to the..question of what

⁸*Insight* 464[489].

exactly occurs when we are knowing. For this reason it is only at the end of a prolonged effort at understanding his own activity of understanding that the reader is engaged in a judgment.⁹ This judgment does not commit the reader to any position on the nature of reality. Whether reality is one or many, material etc., there is the undeniable and intelligently formulated factual judgment, 'I am a knower'.⁹ With the identification of 'being' as the objective of the pure desire to know there is, strangely enough, still no commitment on reality. By the conscientious objector the definition can be taken as nominal: whatever I can know or want to know I will call ... Umpa? Odo? what's in a name? ...'Being? One is led further to an appreciation of the complex notion of objectivity. Yet it is only in the clear statement of the **position** and the **counterpositions** that the key element in the strategy falls into place."¹⁰

But now, in our present context, this is a large scale strategic shift, not in the critical problem, but in the problem of foundational prayer.

Moreover, I would say that there has to be a prior occurrence of a dark night of the senses, such as is found in reflective orientations of the Orient: What is this so-real surround of my loneliness that is not real? This "empirical residence"¹¹ of my desire, my flickering light of reason and of faith?

3. Open-eyed Foundational Contemplation

It is no accident that the title implicitly refers to the beginning and the end of Ignatius of Loyola's Exercises and places them in an open-eyed context. Lifting those and the intervening exercises into that context is a challenge for later generations of post-axial prayer. The question here for me is, How might I help towards beginners get

⁹The topic and regular refrain of chapter 11 of *Insight*.

¹⁰I quote from my article in *Philosophical Studies*, (Ireland), 1962: "The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan". The article is now available in the Website Archives.

¹¹The title of Cantower 32; the mood is anticipated in Cantower 21, "The Epilodge", a Cantower which corresponds to the Epilogue of *Insight*.

an eye-full of the context?

What, then, do I mean by both “open-eyed” and eye-full”? I could pun and say that I mean reaching for an I-full of Faith-filled axiomatic realism. But let us pause for a few paragraphs -densely, compactly, doctrinally, over some initial reachings. At the end I shall return to the problem of the section’s title.

That initial reaching can be associated with the need for an enlargement of the semi-axiomatics of *Insight* 388[413] or my back-up propositions given in the discussion of W0 at the end of *Prehumous* 2. I wish to draw attention to three axiom-sets, but let me speak just of single compact axioms here: an axiom of intentionality; an axiom of infinity; and axiom of incompleteness.

The most evidently missing axiom is an axiom of intentionality. The real is reached by CUE, but the reach is not some strange mythic achievement. It is, rather, a strange achievement of finitude that we can name an achievement of intentionality. The fully-contextualized inner word of truth is finite spirit’s mediated grip on being. Axioms of intentionality would capture this feature of finitude. “There remains a further step to be taken. Why have forms two different modes of existence, natural or intentional, according to differences in recipients? It is because Thomist system conceives perfection as totality: if finite things which cannot be the totality are somehow to approximate towards perfection which is totality, they must somehow be capable not only of being themselves but also in some manner the others as others; but being themselves is natural existence, and being the others as others is intentional existence.”¹²

I won’t enlarge on this, but only note that the enlargement that I envisage here is a conceiving within system, a formulation that has isomorphisms with formulae and metagrams. Further, it is noteworthy that Lonergan’s comment here nudges us towards all three of the axiom-sets mentioned: totality raises the issue of infinity, and the gap between varieties of finitude and infinity or totality raises issues of incompleteness. The

¹²Lonergan, *Verbum*, 162.

axiom-set of infinity belongs to the larger system that includes not only chapter 19 of *Insight* but the dominant sub-set that belongs to the set of theorems on the absolutely supernatural. Finally, the axiom-set of incompleteness is dominated by that ultimacy of remote mystery, but it ranges from the elementary theorems regarding geometry and logic to a remote thematics of the control of analogical thinking and anagogical reaching.

This is altogether too compact and obscure, pointing towards decades of personal climbing and generations of communal culture-building. But it is best said in the hope of encouraging the slow beginnings of the preliminary ontogenetic and phylogenetic struggle.

Back, then, THEN, to the question of venturing on the road of an open-eyed foundational contemplation which, in fact, will carry forward the spontaneous seeds of these three axioms. But the “back” is your challenge, taking that previous challenge of mine, *Cantower IX*, “Position, Poisition, Protopossession” in a new personal direction. But at the heart of that new direction, or its old versions sketched in insight or less thoroughly in *Wealth of Self*, is the call to reach, so slowly and darkly, for some serious control of the non-objectivity of the sensing in which one’s wonder roams.

So I wind round to the pointers of the previous two sections, to the invitation to enter the dark nights of sense and of mind, the dark nights that merge as problem in our reality as narrow marrowed minding, that merge in our answering minding as a luminous aggreformism, heart of our dark reality of thin explanation, our shabby echo of the Word.