

Q. 28 (Bob Henman, February 27) “Phil, how would I teach the paragraph that you talk regularly about, the one that begins at the bottom of page 609 to 610 of *Insight*, to my present undergraduate class or to anyone at a B.A. university level?

A. 28. Let me name the paragraph 60910. I hope it becomes a central topic of our further questions. It does in fact, in my view, become a central topic in theology, since that paragraph’s meaning and task is identified by me in *The Road to Religious Reality* (see, for a beginning the Introduction, 18-22) as a meaning sublated into the meaning of *Comparison (Method, 250)*, thus solving the problem of Lonergan’s search for a treatise on the Mystical Body. Humorously, I think of Lonergan’s comments in *Insight* on that issue (763-4) as his “Fermat’s Last Theorem”, implicitly solved in *Method* : as it were – like Fermat – a marginal note in *Insight*. It took me a wilily-weaving decade or so to solve the problem in the way expressed in that little book – its full title is *Method in Theology 101 AD 9011. The Road to Religious Reality* - 64 pages compared to twice that in Wiley’s final work, “Modular Elliptic Curves and Fermat’s Last Theorem” in the *Annals of Math.* 1995. I find it slightly odd that it caused no stir among the Lonergan community. Have I been so thoroughly written off? Perhaps I should have moved away from popular talk of “A Rolling Stone Gathers *Nomos*” (the title of two chapters on the future power of the cycles in linguistics and economics) to something indicating the theoretical and “existential gap” (see *CWL* 18, index), with a title like “Nomodular Cycles and Lonergan’s Last Theorem”? Perhaps that would have challenged my colleagues to challenge the fact that Nomodular Cycles are far more difficult to understand than Modular Elliptic Curves? Well, let’s see what I can throw into the arena on April 1<sup>st</sup>, Easter Monday. All Fools’ Day seems a good day to up-grade the Spring Campaign that I promised (See *Posthumous* 14, note 16; *Posthumous* 15, note 2; *Posthumous* 17, note 3; *Posthumous* 21, note 18).

But let us get back to Bob’s practical question: how to talk this paragraph out to his undergraduate students.

I’ll ramble round the topic suggestively first, bringing in the broader context, then facing the topic in a more practical way. But I would note immediately the great

thing that Bob is doing, “making conversion a topic” (*Method*, 253) where conversion is towards understanding and teaching this paragraph.

So we might begin by thinking of the series of opinions about X. Better to pick an X, or several: A. the sunflower; B. minding C. A Shakespearean Play or some such work; D. the Trinity.

Suppose you want to teach Linnaeus’ view of the sunflower: a reasonably good classificatory description of a plant from seed to adult flower. The class would appreciate that this would be easier if they had a general grip on the sequence of views that go right up to today’s heavily chemical talk [a little of this is in *Cantower* 2]. Then Linnaeus’ view could be more easily communicated. How so? This has to be thought out and talked out. It is all the more easily communicated if the class has a nominal general heuristic. Here, think of the way the periodic table is inside the cover of grad 11 textbooks in chemistry. Might there come a time when there is a similar table inside the botany text? Might it contain something like the sunflower as  $f(p_i ; c_j ; b_k)$ ? This could certainly be the case, and the subtlety of its meaning would depend on the emergence in the minds of the teenagers of a grip on the meaning of the two semi-colons. This is a meaning which at present is not easily communicated even to students of Lonergan. Recall: “to this end there have to be invented appropriate images of the relevant physical and chemical processes” (*Insight*, 489). My suspicion here - check out your own grip - is that I have stepped out of the zone of competence and comfort of most of my Lonergan-student audience. And notice now that we are on to, or back to, or back-to-the-wall in B above: minding. How many students - you of course included - have so read *Insight* chapters one to sixteen, that they have a grip on the genetics that goes with the story of the minding of minding? “Goes with”: note that I point here to the massive task of reversing counterpositions etc (*Method* 250). But this is not something to get into here, in our elementary struggling. In its fullness it requires a massive three-dimensional global-shaped matrix (Markov style: see *Randomness, Statistics and Emergence*, 237) that gives a grip on the geohistory of opinions in their ongoing interweaving: try envisaging this for any or all of A, B, C, D, above. Theologians are more familiar with D. Think of the weaving of views e.g. from Antioch and Alexandria through journeys to

early councils. Then think of the geo-weavings related to the Council of Trent and – wow – the geo-weavings related to Vatican II. But others may go other ways: I think of the geo-weavings that led to the solution of Fermat's last theorem.

Have I gone off topic here? On the contrary this is the stuff – it has been my experience especially in teaching first year university physics - that would attract a first or second year audience in botany or physics or theology. It nudges towards a larger view and motivates them to the climb. But note that it makes demands on the teacher that are brutally summed up in that push of Lonergan: "So it comes about that ...." (*Insight*, 537: line 11 from the bottom of the page).

So now I come back more concretely to Bob's question, How might one teach 60910 to a university class? But - we see better, I hope, from our ramble - that, alas, is a task for the future. First we need a subgroup that struggles towards being teachers. I know that Bob is on the ball from years of undergraduate teaching in different zones. But I fear that his interest in communicating little relevant bits of Lonergan's view is not generally shared, especially the inclusion in that interest, in this case, of finding for oneself, and so for others, illustration of what Lonergan talks about in his dense heuristic in this 60910. How do you teach 60910? You need the patience to hunt for illustrations from the topics on which the class is working. I began with Linnaeus above, but the group may not have Botany in their program. Mathematics? Then you can think of Lonergan's terrible challenge regarding being competent to deal with the development of mathematics (It is in the short work "Understanding and Method": Lonergan's challenging comment is reproduced in *The Road to Religious Reality*, 36-37), knowing that it is something of a joke in our culture. A great number of Bob's classes, I know, are in sociology. But they really have no sense of a story of the zone. So: one has to invent a simple version, almost a caricature, of bits of the story. We are looking here at seeding a later culture in which a luminous heuristic notion of development is a common possession, way beyond the culture that produced e.g. the classic, *The Development of Logic* (Kneale and Kneale). Bob, I know, has been working very seriously on the development of medicine, and knows the challenge of finding and identifying descriptively developments and of pushing on from there for an explanatory genetics. He knows that this illustration

is beyond his students but is still useful: that is one source of his question. But his key leap is to see the difficulty and this is only done adequately by such an effort as he made in medicine. “We are looking at seeding a later culture.”: I ask you to repeat that sentence of mine but add in any other tome: *The Development of Mathematics*, *The Development of Economics*, whatever. In a previous question, Q/A. 26, I considered Lonergan’s key transition-insight of economics, and its related equation. But what is to be said about the genetics of economic science?

Here, it seems to me, we have an opportunity at serious cultural self-education. Why is this paragraph 60910 so hard to teach? Because of the immaturity of humanity’s understanding, an immaturity cloaked by rich comparative descriptions (See *Sane Economics and Fusionism*, the final comments). But the opportunity we have is to be focused by facing a discomforting reading lesson. Here we go, then.

“First, there is the genetic sequence in which insights gradually are accumulated”.

A dozen of Lonergan’s genius-words in 60910. Might you have a shot at pinning down the genetic sequence in any discipline, a shot that is at least decently descriptive? Embarrassing, isn’t it? Well, at least it nudges us towards a more reverend grip on the genius of Lonergan and the humour of his book: his heuristics of development in chapter 15, a prerequisite here, is just out of the ballpark of contemporary thinking, even in botany (See *Method in Theology: Refinements and Implementations*, Part One). So let us leave this for the moment, and come back to Bob’s question in the new context of Frank Braio’s question, Q. 29, where we again see that Lonergan’s “definition of development serves to supply a single scheme that unites otherwise unrelated principles” (*Insight*, 482), in the venture which is called “depth psychology” (*ibid*), a venture that, without neuroscience, is only a Linnaean reach for a distant view.

At any rate, to use what in fact is a silly statement, “**the message is clear**”. The paragraph, within the entire Lonergan Corpus – not a mystical corpus but an explanatorily heuristic corpus to be brought to life by global functional collaboration – is a heuristic for a millennium, and the “First” of the second line of 60910 sets us up for a millennium run to line 14, “fuse into a single explanation”.

