

SOFDAWARE 6
Rambles in *Method 250*

March 2004

You should be relieved to read here that we are now moving back to “simple small steps” in our struggle with page 250. But allow me a paragraph or two before we begin, in section 6.1.

If you have patiently read - in any sense - thus far in these last five SOFDAWAREs you will have found that there was a movement towards complexity that was discouraging? puzzling? irritating? The previous essay had *Completion* in its title, the second of the six italicized words of page 250. If you read *Method in Theology* enough to be familiar with the nudge towards ‘feelings’ so popular among Lonergan disciples, you might spontaneously have expected some pointers in that direction. So, What is *Completion*?

Well, you add feelings, speak out, write out, how and what you feel about *what is assembled*. And certainly that names, with some vague initial description that gives those word minimal meaning, what you do here. But, when the task matures in the next few generations, it will be a whole new ball park. That is what my complexification is all about: the parallel is the scientific revolution over centuries in physics: again, think of acceleration as lifted into the ballpark of the hard-won understanding that is hidden in signs such as d^2s/dt^2 . I have no trouble intimating that to a good first-year class in physics: the library is full of incomprehensible books that shout at them of remote meaning. I have enormous trouble at getting even the best of Lonergan expert out of their educational background towards a sense of the beginning of a scientific revolution. One reputable scholar admitted to me that he had not worked on displacement on the first page of chapter one, that he failed to figure out how the square-root rule worked, etc: yet on he goes! Another asked me very seriously why Lonergan put in those obscure chapters at the beginning of *Insight*. A third leading figure, who at least was past those difficulties, admitted to me that he had no idea what

chapter 16 of the book was about.

Well, its about a science of metaphysics that is to emerge in the next millennium. But now I am into the second paragraph that I asked you to tolerate, so let's cut back to the small steps. In the first section here I get back to the very elementary reflections on our single *assembled* book by MacIntyre. The book is not important and you don't need it to make this beginning. In section 6.2 I invite you to ramble with me - finally! - down the top half of page 250, through the famous six steps. In section 6.3 we continue the ramble, to the end of the page, but with an eye to getting a sense of what we are opening up towards, a sense of beginning and of strategies in our own efforts. Those strategies will find a larger ballpark beyond the first three Quodlibets, but that larger ball park will be determined by the various groupings and the range of questions that emerge.¹ In section 6.4 I return to the topic of these introductory remarks, but only briefly. We are, after all, from here on in and out, trying to take some small steps for humankind: the time for broad mapping on my part is almost over. I say that with all the more conviction in that I have spent these last days proof-reading *Lack in the Beingstalk*, which is a pretty heavy mapping finished two years ago. It was followed by 400,000 words of further mapping. Enough!

6.1 MAC checking

We raised the question of doing this back in SOFDAWARE 4. What are we to have a shot at here? We have our assembled book, MacIntyre, and - if you happen to have it - you already have in chapter 3 of *Beyond Establishment Economics* a simple illustration of the sort of puttering involved. There the book involved was Gregory

¹Questions have, in fact, already emerged from different sources - in feminism, in law, in social psychology, about the possibility of a contemporary perspective on virtues - if you like, on a contemporary version of Thomas Aquinas second part of the *Summa*. My selection of MacIntyre fits nicely into that context. See the fuller perspective of Quodlibet 3.

Mankiw's text on economics. While I point to the value of taking someone who seems to be doing assembly, if only shabbily, you can tackle this exercise with any book. Instead of Mankiw, there are introductory texts in chemistry, psychology, sociology, whatever. The challenge is to home in on this one zone of the full spectrum of the elements of meaning and to come to self-appreciate by noticing the muddles in the author you read. It might be useful to note that what we are doing as a simple beginner's exercise is brought into a loftier context by identifying the exercise as a step into² the third canon of hermeneutics: such loftiness might motivate! And it is no harm to keep in mind that this focus on MAC can be replaced by a focus on various other selections of the elements, or single elements: such a mind-keeping helps towards catching on the empirical work of detecting types of personality, types of differentiations of consciousness. Always present is the fact that unlike physics there is no heap of big books on these topic to keep us humble and striving.

We have then a detecting job to do about, say, a page in MacIntyre: does his writing reveal his opting for *Mac* or *McA*? In my own venture here I went through the entire book, but I would recommend rather that you take a page here and there, and definite sentences. What are you doing? Recall the reflections on *assembly* as including the assemblers, you and him. You have some grip on, luminousness about, MAC as opposed to McA. How much? That depends on whether you had a good teacher in self-understanding: I have know people who have 'gone through' *Insight* and remained quite truncated, incapable of the beginnings of this little self-attention. The exercise, then, has a first advantage in pushing back towards one's own answer to the question, What do I mean by MAC?

Depending on your level of self-possession within that Meaning of MAC you

²I would wish you to stress the minimalism. Our efforts might be connect to the minimalist perspective of ch.13 of *Method in Theology*, a minimalism neatly noted there at the bottom of page 336, which I have quoted already: "the key issue is whether concepts result from understanding or understanding results from concepts".

can notice, and appreciate slowly in the manner of an empirical scientist, how the data of MacIntyre's phrases and sentences show him blocked by a long tradition of Scotist pseudo-thinking and mind-boggling talking. Pseudo-thinking: because MacIntyre thinks Macwise; mind-boggling talk, because the talk surrounds the mind with a **bogle** (Scottish, specter), a bugbear.

Find your own examples, in your own choice for the assembled. Might a ramble through MacIntyre help? In answering that question for us now, I scanned through my copy of the book with all its markings and concluded that there was little point in selecting, in filling pages with quotations. The key thing to catch on to is that this is just one little piece of the massive empirical work involved. You can connect up the effort with the sub-task of *Reduction*: finding the same affinities, but now the affinities are from the line-up of different sentences on different pages right through the book. A thorough sifting would e.g. collect the word *concept* in different phrases, and detect the twist on the McA mentality. Perhaps there is no harm in my noting some of the more sweeping usages, as when he writes "the concept of intelligible action is a more fundamental concept"³, "the importance of the concept of intelligibility"⁴, or more sweeping methodological suggestions as when he writes about people "who stood back from their dispute and asked in a systematic way what the appropriate rational procedures are for settling this particular kind of dispute"⁵. What, you must ask, is on, in, his mind when he talks thus? And, of course, what is on your mind when you talk of him talking thus!⁶

³MacIntyre, 195.

⁴MacIntyre, 195.

⁵MacIntyre, 242.

⁶I am trying to avoid complexity here, but notice the issues the significance of symbolism, of lagging expression and of flawed linguistic feedback that mesh with or hinder the necessary developments for finality's drive (See both *Insight* and

The first sentence of the book talks of a catastrophe, a loss of literature. But here we are noting the deeper catastrophe, the loss of a literature that isn't lost but rather is mis-read: the assembler Aristotle is missed in the assembly, and the assembler MacIntyre too is lost. The loss haunts all culture, and it haunts Lonergan studies even as it talks about such losses. How do we break the cycle of decline? By SOFDAWARE!

Further, I would wish you to note that this dominant McA view fits nicely into a rejection of the effort to seriously understand: so it helps dodge the "events, statements, movements" that constitute the scientific revolution. So, philosophy can serenely tunnel on in talk of virtue and feeling, blinkered from the reality of serious interest of chemists and psychologists etc etc in human evils and excellences. But that is another story.

Still, have we not - after the exercises involved here - a better idea of "seeking out affinities". What of "oppositions"? Is MacIntyre opposed to himself in his own writing? What do his question marks mean? Etc.

At all events, have we not now a sounder sense of empirical tasks to be undertaken? In the next essay we shall aim at getting a simple sense of the complex linguistic context required to enhance that soundness and control that undertaking.

6.2 250, Top Half

If you review self-digestingly the exercises of the previous section - blush if you skipped them entirely! - you will notice, and digest, that you were shuffling around the sixth sub-task of *Selection*. McA as an operating view is a fundamental disorientation, opposed to the operating subject, opposed in its thematization to the thematic of the elements of meaning. But it takes time and energy to sort out the sub-moves here.

And it takes time to spell out what one, you or anyone else, is doing when they are trying to do the six sub-tasks. Notice that terrible 'apriority' bent in our thinking: method, our uncultured selves insist, is prior to doing. And certainly - it insists - it can

Phenomenology and Logic on these topics).

be prior to my doing: I know what it is to play the piano or climb Everest, since I have witnessed it.

We simply have to try these six out, and talk to ourselves, write to ourselves, about it. I look at my old scribbled notes on these six, going back more than thirty years. I have a single summative key page: but it would take a very lengthy essay to begin to make sense of it to you, unless you too have your long memories of messing. Here is where we need shared messing: nor is it necessary to make it a group thing, at least initially. But the discomforting discovery may well be the manner in which serious science demands repetition, repeated exercising of each small step. This is where you may notice a certain ambiguity in the first page of chapter one of *Insight*. The previous section here is inviting you to take hold of that first paragraph: attention to the little thing of the use of the word *concept*. But the end of the page may leave you with a false impression of the digestion and self-digestion involved in intussuscepting the principle of displacement. But I won't go on about this: Cantowers 27-31 were a long enough introduction to the task of really reading the beginning of *Insight*.

Nor should I go on about the six sub-tasks: though I have a hard time resisting a sharing of a half page on each! Perhaps I should at least say that getting through Classification and Selection, was mightily, aided in my own case, by "having in mind" what I now call the first word of metaphysics, W1, which I might as well repeat here:

$$f (p_i ; c_j ; b_k ; z_l ; u_m ; r_n).$$

Have you met it before? It talks of you and me as being a complex function of physical, chemical, botanical, zoological, human properties. And the last? Not to worry: it edges into the possibility of that other property 'split off' first by Philip the Chancellor of Paris in the 1230s. How do you read it? (You will notice that I vary the terminology here occasionally: r and q are interchanged for that sixth level.) So, I simply note here the clue that, if a property of 'us' expressed is connected with the first four layers of properties, it is likely to related to the 'other grounds' of line 12; if the property is of the top three, then watch out for dialectic opposition. Do I leave you puzzled? Good!

6.3 250, 2nd half

We have already rambled round this part of the page. Different investigators? I am thinking myself of ten elders - this is not a graduate assistant's task! - each having a shot at the whole job. They write their big books. They all read the ten big books and tackle a revision of their own in the light of that reading. So, twice each of them has to come up with those very revealing last chapters: chapter Y: this is what I think is progress, and chapter Z: this are the grounds upon which I would fantasize the future. Recall my quotation from MacIntyre above? Shortly after he writes: "It is this account - to be given in a subsequent book - which I hope to deploy...."⁷ This is just not on if you are in this business: you have to take a thematic stand, something strangely avoided by many Lonergan disciples. I have written a great deal about this in the Cantowers which I do not wish to repeat except to note that the stand is to be authentically narrative.⁸ How has my long search shaped up, how does it shape up for the next day and decade?

So, the so-called elders who have spent their lives in literary scholarship are slowly cycled out⁹ of the search for adequate foundations. One "simple" component in that cycling-out has already been **stirred in** here. It is, the conversion or displacement to non-literary language, to the complexification of image or symbol. It is a sub-species of psychic conversion. We face it together in SOFDAWARE 7 in a facing that will self-illustrate a fuller meaning of the last word on page 250, *reversed*.

⁷MacIntyre, 242.

⁸We will touch on that concretely in notes 11 and 12 of the following essay. I discussed it more generally in the Cantowers, e.g. in Cantower 39, regarding the narrative nature of heated exchanges in 20th century physics.

⁹The cycling-out is a complex process of discernment.

6.4 “One can go on”, far, far from “breathless”¹⁰

I am distracted here by a memory of Elizabeth Anscombe at the Florida Conference of Easter 1970, the quick-witted cigar-smoking Englishwoman about whom many tales are told. The story goes that at the end of a lecture an American approached and remarked to her, “Miss Anscombe, I didn’t understand one word you said”. To which Anscombe replied: “Oh: which word was that?”

One can go on. Which one? As I mentioned at the beginning, this writing happens to coincide with my proof-reading of *Lack in the Beingstalk* towards its publication in June 2004, the centennial time of Bloomsday, for which I once wrote an examination. The SOFDAWARE follows this expresses positional conditions of a healthy going-on, more compactly and more advanced than their meaning as I meant it at seventy in that lengthy book. The examination still stands well as a graduation test in methodology. Perhaps more than one can go on to do it adequately at this centennial of the birth of Lonergan and Bloomsday, but I suspect that it will not enter into common meaning till the Bloomsday bicentennial. Might there be, at that later stage of our axial times, a larger Towering community who sense and salt in the global reach a sunflower seed’s luminous seeking for a van Gogh sunshine-face, myriads of immortal diamonds spinning into an eternal ring?

So why not just halt, so that you may take your position before this simply examination, self-examination? What better way to end my SOFDAWARENESS?¹¹ “Sea,

¹⁰No doubt you recognize the two quoted pieces from two terrifying paragraphs? The first recalls the mid-page paragraph of *Method in Theology*, 287. The second is the paragraph on the top of page 733 in the old edition of *Insight* about just not being “with it”. [It is on page 755 of the new edition]. The ‘breathless’ business is sadly as true of the new Lonerganists as it was of the old Thomists.

¹¹This, in fact, is the last piece of the eight SOFDAWARES to be written. The eighth essay is simply a page inviting a fuller collaboration. With that collaboration goes the possibility of a need to toss questions back and forth, sift out directions of development, handle decay, whatever. In that context, Paris of 750 years ago came to

sea! Here, weir, reach, island, bridge. Where you meet I. The day. Remember! Why there that moment and us two only?"¹²

Metasystematics 300 3 hours Wednesday, June 16th, 2004¹³

Attempt the following questions, using overlaps and interrelations as convenient.

1. Express the foundational perspective that grounds an integrative hierarchy theory, illustrating aggregformic binding in a particular pair of neighboring sciences in such a way as to bring out the limits of disposition on coincidental aggregates.

mind, when the young Thomas and his company were under attack after Lent of 1253. Thomas started his *ad libitum* disputations in the mid-fifties. The present situation, in my view, is one in which Brother Bernard is under the subtle attack of sweet simplification and subtle avoidance. Let us get it out into the open with some heat, the heat of *completion*. So, **Quodlibets** seem in order. You may note that, as well as naming somewhat loose "as you please" exchanges, a quodlibet can also be a humorous musical medley. And do we not badly need humour and satire and music in the face of decay? And of course, sustaining symbolism: I began this SOFDAWARE struggle on the feast of lights, Joyce's birthday, and end it here, and indeed, my long tiring direct writing career, on the feast of the great non-Irishman, St. Patrick. But I am not done commenting. Thomas commented in the mid-fiftes on the Sentences of Lombard: I will no doubt comment on some Sentences of Lonergan during this equivalent decade, as well as on some other commentators. Are we to repeat the correction of correctors stuff of an earlier age? No, there is a re-cycling throw-off process stirring there, in the treacle of decay.

¹²*Finnegans Wake*, 626: heading into the last nine hundred words before the beginnagain.

¹³The examination was invented in 1989 as the final Appendix of *Process. Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders*. It was modeled on the honours examinations for graduation in mathematical physics in University College Dublin in the 1960s where one was given no choice, but the expectations were that if one attempted four or five questions extremely well that one could attain the first honours mark of 45%.

2. Discuss limit theorems, limitation theorems, canonicity and enumerability in the context of a general heuristics of analogy.
3. By specifying relevant nested inverse insights, locate 20th century mathematical theories of probability within a metatheoretic of empirical probability. Illustrate their limited value in particle physics and in cosmogenetic studies.
4. Sublate Joyce's and Aquinas' reflections on art into a metatheoretic of unity-thinking. Discuss the significance of this larger view of beauty in cases of incompleteness, fortuitous or intentional: fragmentary statues, collage films, etc. Reflect on the incomplete self, the incomplete drama of history, the cosmos, in this context.
5. Enlarge on the manner in which general aggreformic heuristics excludes the biases of description and predicamental relating in sciences. Illustrate its dynamics by considering the sequences of physicochemical acts that are informed by some particular organism's growth patterns.
6. Give a heuristic account of aggreformic metalinguistics, including precise introspective indications of the grounds both of linguistic meaning and of transcultural grammar. Indicate how the resulting systematics contextualizes normatively transformational grammar and general semantics.
7. Elaborate a precise synchronic metasystematics of dreams, with emphasis on relevant physical and chemical fluctuations in REM sleep. Add indications of the broader diachronic heuristics relevant to an explanatory history or biography of significant dreams. Pinpoint the role of analogy and inverse insight in dealing with the religious significance of dreams in an absolutely supernatural order.

8. Illustrate, in some particular instance of historical development, the manner in which the canon of complete explanation, supplemented by precisions on metaphysical equivalents and grammatical invariants, locates and controls significant descriptive meanings and contributes to the emergence of relatively invariant pure formulations in that particular case. Add comments regarding the limitations on pure formulations of supernatural developments.

9. Give a precise account of the manner in which a fully contextualized heuristics of is-questioning gives rise to a thematic of the functional specialty of history. Relate this precision to the problem of borrowed context in judgment and to the distribution of what-questioning in functional specialization.

10. On the hypothesis of the transposition of economic control and microcontrol to non-political meanings, categorize synchronically the normative dynamics of local and global political discourse. Locate this categorization diachronically and pragmatically within the context of the genetic geopolitical systematics of the seventh and eighth functional specialties.