

need to apprentice ourselves to those who do see a holistic connection to the world. C. turns, then, not only to the desert fathers or contemplatives (he mines the works of Eckhart, Antony, Evagrius, Augustine, and Thomas Merton), but also to Darwin, for whom he claims a kind of spirituality in his amazement at the beauty of that which was being formed in nature. C. also looks at Thoreau, John Muir, and Aldo Leopold as people who saw a holistic connection to the world.

C. draws on his own personal wilderness experiences. He also finds in poets and other thinkers rich resources for a contemplative ecology. For instance he cites Czeslaw Milosz's references to the idea of *apokatastasis panton* or "the renewal of all things." Milosz never ceased struggling with the radical ambiguity of existence, the sense that nature is at once sacrament and harbinger of death. Yet he stood within a tradition that is tenacious in trying to discover the ground for an authentic hope in the face of this ambiguous reality. Milosz had previously made the confession, "I belong to those who believe in *apokatastasis*. / That word promises reverse movement, . . . / It means restoration. So believed Gregory of Nyssa, / Johannes Scotus Erigena, Ruysbroeck, and William Blake" (312).

I cannot recommend highly enough a prayerful, contemplative reading of C.'s profound meditation and reflections on a contemplative ecology and what it entails for finding our true spiritual depths.

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Self-Possession: Being at Home in Conscious Performance. By Mark D. Morelli. Boston: Lonergan Research Institute at Boston College, 2015. Pp. xvi + 342. \$28.95.

How do you review a book that you have massively marked up and underlined? Like my worn copy of Bernard Lonergan's *Insight* (the 1957 edition), I will hold on to Morelli's new volume for its significant contribution to coming to know myself. While barely mentioning Lonergan, the meditations and reflections here aim at what *Insight* aimed at, the self-appropriation of the human subject in his or her conscious activities.

M. begins with the basic transcendental notions of meaning, objectivity, truth, reality, and value, and illustrates that we cannot get around the basic commitment implicit in these notions. We are, in fact, inescapably committed to them even if we explicitly deny them. We cannot meaningfully militate against meaning, or truthfully hold that there is no truth, or commit ourselves to the value of the valueless. By the very thrust of our being we are committed to these notions even if in our explicit knowing and acting we contradict this basic commitment of our being.

M.'s point is that the ancient challenge of self-knowledge goes on along with and underlies the other challenges in the conscious flow of life—and that it behooves us to clarify this deepest of challenges. Very helpful on this journey is a language of conscious performance analysis (CPA)—a mouthful, but extremely important as we attempt to

separate the wheat from the chaff within the flow of our conscious lives. Cultural “sedimentation” rooted in excessive individualism, pragmatism, or our own forms of megalomania can easily infect the flow of our conscious living. We can easily slip into inattentive, unintelligent, erroneous, and worthless forms of living—that is, until somewhere within the depths of our being we hear a deeper call, a call that informs the deepest level of our being, a call to meaning, to truth, to reality, goodness, and value. M.’s meditations and reflections point to this drive that often comes to the fore when we are quiet and still. It is what genuinely prophetic people find within themselves when they go into the desert. He presents the reader with what he calls an elemental meditation:

At this moment, *I find myself preferring meaning to nonsense*. I might not find it, but I am looking for it. This preference of mine is so basic that I can’t eliminate it, no matter how hard I try. Even if I were to declare a preference for the meaningless, I would do so only because I find it *meaningful* to do so now. . . (5)

Among the topics M. treats are consciousness, conscious operations and their order, and the motifs of conscious performance: practical, intellectual, aesthetic, dramatic, and mystical—roughly equivalent to Lonergan’s patterns of experience. Noteworthy are the basic moods of self-presence: praise, blame, and the basic commitment.

The basic moods may be brought to light by considering how we praise and blame others for their conscious performance. We often praise one another for orderly performance and blame one another for disorderly performance. We approve of those who exhibit their basic commitment to meaning, objectivity, knowledge, truth, reality, and value. We disapprove of those who seem to be straying or violating that commitment either inadvertently or deliberately. (130)

Such communal praise and blame involve different degrees of personal risk and corresponding levels of courage according to the deepening and more refined levels of consciousness. It takes greater courage to share publicly one’s understanding than one’s experience, one’s judgment than one’s understanding, one’s conviction and decision-making than one’s judging.

On reading this book the question occurs to me: How does M.’s book “work” in mediating what Lonergan called “intellectual conversion,” that “startling” and “strange” breakthrough to understanding ourselves? It would be extremely interesting to interview Morelli about his experience in teaching the contents and practices in this book. It is certainly more user-friendly than *Insight*. For those who want a pedagogically oriented introduction to what Lonergan called self-appropriation, for those who want to appropriate the philosophical basis for Catholic theology, for those who simply want to get to know themselves better, I could not recommend this book more highly. It is an important book. The stakes are high, impacting nothing less than the direction of our culture and our universities, as well as the “counter-cultures” that hopefully are our Catholic universities.

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