

## Explanation, Description and Exposition

The following is a brief outline of three terms which can apply to the practice of *lectio divina*, the slow, meditative reading of Scripture. At a future date this outline can be worked into an article. For the present, it is posted for what it's worth.

**Explanation:** This particular form of expression seeks to draw distinctions between three chief terms, beginning, middle, and end or conclusion. It involves a rigorous intellectual (and willful) application of our faculties. The explanatory process is often necessary for the unearthing of a new discovery whether it be in the scientific or cultural fields of human endeavor. Due to its pioneer work of establishing operational principles, explanation is aware of its own bounded nature as standing in opposition to the relatively formless void from which it has just emerged. Our attention is aligned in accord with the place-to-place movement so familiar to the passage of energy (beginning, middle, and end). Due to the advent of a new field of reference, explanation requires an organizational principle which we call the ego. This principle is essentially neutral, but any measure of success can make the ego assume willful control of the explanatory process. In this fashion, explanation assumes a polemic tone as opposed to its inherently heuristic structure.

**Description:** Once explanation has initiated a new field of discovery, it remains sterile unless filled out by a second gesture. We call this operation of expansion the descriptive method. Description does not make new breakthroughs; instead, it circles around the field of explanation and softens it, so to speak, thereby enabling us to more fully appreciate what has been newly posited. This particular way of speaking about reality is characterized by adjectives, adverbs and verbs. Nouns take a second place for they belong to the explanatory process. It should be noted that the Hebrew language is primarily descriptive by nature. That is to say, Hebrew is founded upon the concept of the verb which implies ongoing motion as opposed to the static concept inherent within a noun. Furthermore, the Psalms embody Hebrew's descriptive mode best of all. They delineate the various moods of our soul without drawing (explanatory) conclusions.

Description has no beginning nor end. In this sense it is boundless just as the concept of a verb or adjective is constantly in motion. Description brings into play our artistic faculties as opposed to those of our intellect. Here the chief means of expression belongs to our imagination, our "image making machine." This faculty presents various images which we then order to imitate or give form to a particular aspect of reality. Any embodiment of the descriptive process achieves its fullest expression when it makes the transition from imitation to pretending. This latter concept implies a closer identification with reality, so much so that it makes no distinction between it and the person so pretending. For example, we not only imitate the psalmist's expressions but we actually "pretend" to become these expressions in the technical sense of this term we have offered.

**Exposition:** This third form of articulation is founded upon the first two already posited. It may be perceived as the final result of the educative task belonging to explanation and description. We cannot advance on to exposition as from explanation to description, for the very notion of progress implies place-to-place movement. In explanation, progress is especially noticeable due to the intellect's work. But within description, progress is present but has become more refined or made more subtle. We refer to description's preference for verbs as opposed to nouns in order to verify this.

The expository method is perhaps the most difficult one to achieve in writing, for example. We are required to make that important jump from education (explanation and description) to exposition, something which can only be conceived in terms of an initiation. If we closely examine any religious rite of initiation, we observe that it presents the reality intended for a person to encounter all at once, not in bits and pieces. Furthermore, a rite relies upon the descriptive mode, not the explanatory one, as can be observed by the way in which sacraments are presented.

Exposition is akin to revelation, *apokalupsis*, the un-covering or (literally) the unveiling of a reality which had always been present. In order to become more sensitive to this covered reality, we must realize what covering actually implies. Concealment may be identified with lack of awareness, the absence of studious application. Usually the obstacles to uncovering are those faculties already mentioned under the two categories of explanation and description: will, intellect and imagination. To uncover something does not mean to destroy or to deny the cover itself. Rather, it points to a gesture we make by recognizing what a cover (in any form) actually is, namely, a perception of boundedness. Explanation or description can eliminate this cover. However, exposition draws attention to that which lies beneath the cover...it exposes or reveals a previously hidden reality. Exposition is difficult to master since the required studious application of awareness transcends our familiar educative process. I.e., it is not founded upon the faculty of memory (recollection of past for projection into the future) which is so essential for education.

With regards to writing, the expository method fully transcends imitation and opts for pretending which we have already introduced. To pretend means to expose a reality present yet covered. For example, refer to children when they engage in games of pretending. Within the gesture of expository writing we make a full transition from the covered (incomplete) nature of explanation & description to a reality transcending them both. Once this gesture has been made, we can apply the canon of parsimony which requires the correct minimum of explanation & description in order to facilitate our movement onto the plane of exposition. Perhaps this canon of parsimony which is closely related to a studious application of awareness is why the expository method is seldom achieved.