

## Field Nocturnes 1

## Lonergan's Clearest Challenge to his Followers

A little later I shall clear up the meaning of my title, both for this essay and for this final series. But first it seems to me important to be quite up front about what I am at, especially in these three initial essays.

This essay, then, and the following two essays, are a basic hearty appeal to people interested in Lonergan to shift the focus of attention for the next generation. Would it be helpful to think of the two foci of an ellipse of collaboration? If not, forget it. But, yes, I am thinking for the moment of two foci and of an ellipse of collaboration. The two foci are symbolized by two pages in Lonergan's *Opera Omnia*: page 250 of *Method in Theology* and page 464[489] of *Insight*. Those two pages are, in the main, the topics respectively of the first two essays here. The titles of this essay suggest that the first page - let's just call it **250** - is clear, clearest, while the second page - let's just call it **study**<sup>1</sup> - is deemed, as the second essay says, to be one of the obscurest of Lonergan's writings. Well, we'll just have to see: but my appeal is that you come with me to see, even seize, even be seized.

The third essay is my effort to bring the two foci into the ellipse of collaboration, but don't let the image bother you. It is just a matter, so to speak, of connecting the dots in a practical view of how we might go about the making the transition to the beginnings of collaboration. But enough of anticipations. Two sections follow, one on the topic of that single page of *Method*, the other on the meaning of my title.

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<sup>1</sup>The meaning and mood of study, of stewing over, is a central topic of chapter 3 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*. ch. 3. Its meaning is to be expanded by the considerations in the several hundred pages of study that is tackled in the *Field Nocturnes*, beginning with *Field Nocturne 5*. You are thus to suspect that my previous 200-page effort [in the SOFDAWARE and the *Quodlibet* essays] to open up the challenge of page 250 is being followed now by a similar opening up of the challenge of page 464[489] of *Insight*.

## 1. 250

For me this page, or if you like this short section on “Dialectic : The Structure”, is Lonergan’s clearest challenge. Let us forget, for the moment, its position in his presentation of functional specialization. Even skip down to the second paragraph, but now you should replace the words “different investigators and their different horizons” with “ I myself and my horizon.” You are not isolated, however. There is another investigator present: Lonergan. So you can follow the nudging of his strategy right to the end of the page. It invites you to a practical following of it He has done his bit, say, in his little book *Insight*. Indeed, if he was writing that section of *Method* again, he might put in the description of his bit that he gives later, so you might well pause in your reading of the “final objectification of horizons” to *assemble* the (9) point expression of his horizon that he gives on pages 286-7. What is you’re your expression of your horizon? And, further, what might happen if you moved from *assembling* the two expressions to some slim *Completion* and *Comparison*?

But what is the **you** that so might move? Lonergan’s nine-point assembling is brutally novel to the putterings of these last centuries and to present-day putterers. Why is this? Certainly it is a matter of competent understanding. But is there not a problem of incarnate completeness, of a schizothymic closedness? “We will consider evidence that strongly implicates the involvement of the prefrontal cortex in neural processes in neural processes associated with encountering novelty.”<sup>2</sup> There is a physiology of insight, and “insight in the neuropsychological sense probably is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the possession of insight”<sup>3</sup> in the sense that concerns us here. Might you, indeed might the culture, be trapped in “the Dysexecutive

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<sup>2</sup>Jim Grigsby and David Stevens, *Neurodynamics of Personality*, The Guilford Press, New York, 2000, 280.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 293.

Syndrome,"<sup>4</sup> a "pathological inertia"<sup>5</sup>, or more simply a convention of *haute vulgarization*?<sup>6</sup>

But I am muddying the simple challenge with discomforting realisms of the longer cycle of decline. We shall return to the mud and the mood and the counter-mood in *Field Nocturnes 3*.

Before and beyond the mud, however, is not the challenge simple? It is a huge challenge from which one can simply back off Or one can humbly be "at pains not to conceal his tracks,"<sup>7</sup> to reveal at least the outer onion layers of one's stand, if only to oneself, sensing secretly how one "refuses to face others."<sup>8</sup>

"This point can be summed up in a phrase: the existential gap."<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Titles and Contexts

So many layers bubble round this to-be-little section. Best to start from the context of the quotation from *Phenomenology and Logic* with which I ended the previous section. It was undoubtedly one of the high periods of Lonergan's minding life. In the

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>6</sup>On *haute vulgarization* see Lonergan, *Complete Works*, Volume 6, 121, 155.

<sup>7</sup>*Method in Theology*, 193.

<sup>8</sup>*Insight*, 470[495]. "That subject in his own living has a certain presence to himself, in some queer sense of the word 'presence' .... that experiences the agony of suffering, and the torture of guilt. That subject is reality in that ontic sense prior to any ontology, prior to any conception of himself, as *there*."(*Phenomenology and Logic*, 316).

<sup>9</sup>*Phenomenology and Logic*, 281. I am quoting here from the beginning of chapter 13 of the book, with the hope that at some stage you might read to the end of next chapter from which I quoted in the previous footnote. The next section, "Title and Contexts", invites you to come freshly alive in the context of that larger challenge. But here there is the simpler challenge that might make add freshly to the *there* of the previous note the phrase that follows *there there*. "... as *there*.'Here we are' ...." (*ibid.*, 316). "Here I am, and who am I kidding?" "Otherwise you will not really be on the level" (*ibid.*, 281)

time before the gathering he had generated notes for the second week, but the first week on logic owed a great deal to three intense days before he left Rome during which he read Ladriere's book.<sup>10</sup> My title is very evidently indebted to the reach he expressed in his use of the word *field* both in the preliminary notes and in the lectures. I commented on that use in the final paragraph of the Introduction to the Index of *Phenomenology and Logic*. I recall having tracked down the uses of *field* among existentialists, but losing track of my notes. At any rate, what Lonergan meant by *field* was his molecular mind- reach then for being, desperate for a fresh word: "The field is *the* universe, but my horizon is *my* universe."<sup>11</sup> I say no more about this here, but recommend a stewing over the indexed places in the context of the rescuing of the self-notion of mystery called for in the first section of *Insight* chapter 17. At any rate you should have no difficulty glimpsing how I found myself very spontaneously adding the word *Nocturnes* to title this last series. My *Field Nocturnes* belong to, but battle, the dragged-out centuries of the axial period that are a schizothymic back-off from the dawn.

They are too, I would claim, a pick-up of the *Cantower* enterprise abandoned some years ago in a hope of collaboration.<sup>12</sup> That *Cantower* enterprise, of course, was abandoned only in name. It took shape in the projects that followed: the series SOFDAWARE, *Quodlibets*, *Joistings*, *Eldorede*, *Prehumous*, *Humus*; the book *Method in Theology. Revisions and Implementations*, with its sequel, *Lonergan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*. Perhaps the present series will fill some gaps in the listed

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<sup>10</sup>See *Phenomenology and Logic*, the index, under *Ladriere*.

<sup>11</sup>*Phenomenology and Logic*, 199. I say no more about this here, but recommend a brooding over the indexed places in the context of the rescuing of the self-notion of mystery called for in the first section of *Insight* chapter 17. There is further help in chapter 3 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*.

<sup>12</sup>The hoped-for collaboration faded into the one-sided enterprise that resulted in the essays on page 250 mentioned in note 1 above.

*Cantowers 42-117*, though normal adult growth of these years makes the gap-filling a strange paradoxical task.<sup>13</sup> The issue is the post-axial neuroreach<sup>14</sup> of both the “comeabout” principle and the “childout” principle in global culture. But enough said to lift some obscurity from my title. Perhaps a perusal of the final *Cantower XLI*, providentially on Functional Policy, would help us on our way.<sup>15</sup>

*Preludes, Nocturnes, ....* such references or titles are perhaps of little importance except to myself.<sup>16</sup> What is important is that you find your painful rhythmic way to fantasy, to a visioning of the next billion years. I recall now one of my own high wayfarings as I struggled for a year to write an Introduction to the collaborative volume, *Searching for Cultural Foundations*.<sup>17</sup> The title itself of the Introduction lifts us to fantasy, though I was thinking of the home-going at the time more in terms of only

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<sup>13</sup>More on this in section 2 of *Field Nocturnes 4*.

<sup>14</sup>This is to be a topic in those later “Field Nocturnes” on *Insight* 464[489].

<sup>15</sup>The present essay and project was undertaken in the spring of 2008. As I review this essay now for inclusion on the Website, in August of that year, I decided to leave this paragraph as it was written, even though there has been a change of plan. The change occurred to me during the Halifax Conference in June. There emerged the need to carry forward the original *Cantower* project, but now renamed *Field Nocturnes CanTower*, which series is to contain 76 essays, running from number 42 to number 117. The series will therefore flow from both the *Cantowers* and the *Field Nocturnes*, which are to end at number 41. As you see from the inclusion in the Website (September, 2008), it was not convenient to delay the beginning of the series *Field Nocturnes CanTower* until I had finished this present series.

<sup>16</sup>I have been addicted to Chopin since my early teens, and still reach for his meaning. The early *Cantowers* were paralleled with single pages of what I suppose is my favorite Nocturne, Op. 48, no.2. *Humus 1*, the series previous to this, points to that series relation to the Opus 28 Preludes. Are the parallels of value to the reader? I learned what it was to read in my efforts to play piano, and later in my efforts to read serious mathematics. That is something we all have to do, if we are to be couth. I recall Charles Hefling Jn. pointing to the fact that *Insight* was like a set of Cello exercises. It seems to me that too many readers associate its reading with concert-going.

<sup>17</sup>University Press of America, 1984: editor P. McShane. The other collaborators were F.E.Crowe, R.M. Doran, F.G. Lawrence and J.M.Vertin.

millions of years: “Distant Probabilities of Persons Presently Going Home Together in Transcendental Process.” How better to end this brief *Nocturne* than with the last chords of that Introduction? To the word “Presently” in that title there was a footnote added, curiously anticipating these *Field Nocturnes*: “The intent of the Preface is to give an intimation of the future communal academic heuristics towards which the spiraling of foundations through eight specialties turns subjects.” At all events, the conclusion is now the same, but yet a quite new, conclusion, a quarter century later:

“Part of the glory of history is man’s envisagement of its schedules of probabilities and possibilities. If the sapling of history is cut down from within, still it can have, within, a vision of the temporal noosphere that, paradoxically, redeems God. The envisagement is the core of future academic growth: its opposite is an elderhood that is the fraud of being in reality ‘not old folk but young people of eighteen, very much faded.’<sup>18</sup> Our molecules, ‘our arms and legs filled with sleeping memories,’<sup>19</sup> passionately demand that we fly after the butterfly.

There the butterfly flew over the bright water,  
and the boy flew after it, hovering brightly and  
easily, flew happily through the blue space.  
The sun shone on his wings. He flew after the  
yellow and flew over the lake and over the  
high mountain, where God stood on a cloud  
and sang’.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Times Past*, Random House, New York, vol. 2, 1042.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, vol.2, 874.

<sup>20</sup>The final quotation is from Herman Hesse, *Wandering*, translated by James Wright, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1972, 89. There was a matching quotation, a haiku, at the beginning of the Preface which intimates the transition from the longer cycle of decline to the longer cycle of incline: “I thought I saw the fallen flower / Returning to its branch / Only to find it was a butterfly”.