

## Field Nocturnes 8

### Self-appropriating Hearing

We are going to slowly wander wonderingly around the reading that I have named **study**: that single and singular paragraph on *Insight* 464[489] that deals with the beginnings of studying the organism. Doing that, we may not get to the deeper issue of genetic method raised in the pages after **study**: let's see how it goes. But, in the process of thinking out even the limited statics-dynamics of the organism, I would wish you to share the conviction that without the cyclic dynamic of functional collaboration there can be no serious lift in this study, and indeed, more broadly, from the global abuse of mind in education, industry, religion, the talk of the street. So there is always present the larger aim: to invite the emergence of a community tuned to the full foundational challenge expressed so compactly in the metagram **W3**.<sup>1</sup>

Again, I began this series with a focus on self-appropriation of vision<sup>2</sup>, and indeed would like us to arrive, a small daft community, at a luminous self-appreciation of ourselves **seeing words**: in particular, seeing the words of *Insight*, the whole book and each invisible page, from the strange perspective of the **comeabout**. Is that text worth another visit herenow, now-here, nowhere? "So it comes about that the extroverted subject visualizing extension and experiencing duration gives place to the subject orientated to the objective of the unrestricted desire to know and affirming beings differentiation by certain conjugate potencies, forms, and acts grounding certain laws and frequencies."<sup>3</sup> As I was struggling with this topic I took time to listen and watch, in black and white, Arturo Toscanino conducting, sixty years ago, Beethoven's ninth symphony. Were we, orchestra, camera crew, Ludwig, in some strange black and

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<sup>1</sup>The Metagrams are listed in *Prehumous 2*.

<sup>2</sup>See *Field Nocturnes 5*.

<sup>3</sup>*Insight*, 514[537].

white Space and Time in that hearing? Where were we, where are we, you and I now-here, in the order of the universe, if not in “that order’s dynamic joy and zeal,”<sup>4</sup> that Ode to Joy of finitude? But the tuning into it that I invite is not some mystic trip, but the plodding of a kneeling knowing, hands filled with humus. Let us, then, pause with the strain of an adenosine-triphosphate fantasy to see afresh our ear in the mirror, or the ear of a friend, visualizing its extension and duration. Might we take flight with the seen of these little inefficient wings that are nonetheless sound in their collection of sound?

Collecting sound, collecting in sound? “Most of the parts are inside,”<sup>5</sup> so let us cut to the chase. But it is not a chase: it is a quiet stewing over a galactic achievement of 13.7 million years, as much as possible searching luminously within that galactic achievement. Horse, hound and human, are hearers and heros of that climb, on the road to being being eternally, yet expansively, hearer of the Word. But eschatology in its cosmic circumincessional earfilling is the distant goal of our quiet chase: let us turn to and round the winding windhovering mastery of earmarking sound.

Why do I twist and turn about instead of getting on with the simple anatomy of the ear? Because of the axial period’s psychothymic blocking of the ear and the eye, the molecular superego that warps our journey from first to second time of humanity.<sup>6</sup> We are “Wrestling with the Demons of the Unconscious,”<sup>7</sup> chemical patternings inflicted on us through the longer cycle of decline. So we are attempting a two-person therapeutic adventure edging forward against censorship in shared reverie. “The analyst’s central

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<sup>4</sup>*Insight*, 700[722].

<sup>5</sup>*Insight*, 464 [489].

<sup>6</sup>Lonergan introduced the notion of the two times in *The Triune God: Systematics*, University of Toronto Press, 2007, 405.

<sup>7</sup>The title of the Introduction to Joseph Newirth, *Between Emotion and Cognition. The Generative Unconscious*, Other Press, New York, 2003. We shall consider this book more fully later.

task is the transformation of the patient's externalized concrete experience into internal symbolic experience through mutual processes of reverie, the development of enactments, and transitional experiences."<sup>8</sup> We are both reaching, each in our crippled brainway, for a fresh glimpse of the chemical pattern of exigent being that we are. We are seeking "to integrate disowned aspects of the self and to become more fully alive,"<sup>9</sup> fermenting unconscious fantasies that then become a source of creativity and energy: the generative unconscious."<sup>10</sup>

So we return to the plodding windhovering chase, but first with a certain naivety.<sup>11</sup> We do, then, take advantage of cuts to the chase: our chase "necessitates dissection or anatomy". Our problem-zone needs the fullest imaging, an imaging that indeed controls failures of imaging.. But let us start small, conventionally, and perhaps find later that we have, literally, lost sight of the image and the imaging.

Here, initially, I had a problem: not being a master of the internet! How was I to present diagrams? Most of you are amused at my problem: one has only to surf to find - e.g. under physiology of hearing - the standard diagrams. Many of you, indeed, met such diagrams in school. I would ask you, familiar or not, to reach now towards meeting them freshly. Indeed, I am not being irreverent when I talk of the word being made fresh, and the image of God held cranially hear. Wander, then, and find relevant

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* This enormously complex realm requires much more attention and perhaps I may get that far prehumously. A detoxified version is to be significant in future confrontations of dialectic - I refer to strategies of the end of page 250 of *Method*. But, elementarily, you may think of my talk, and talk of talk, here and above, within that page. Am I the bad guy, troubling Lonerganism "in a neverending game of 'hot potato'?" (*Ibid.*, 12). Who is playing parent here? ... am I an unruly child? Which of us is mythic, which mysterious?: the battle is that identified at the beginning of chapter 17 of *Insight*. The present issue is not the detoxification of psychoanalysis, but the detoxification of Lonerganism. But the immediate issue is the lack of dialogue. My colleagues do not wish to catch my hot potato.

<sup>11</sup>We shall tackle to problem in *Field Nocturnes 15*.

images. Have you found one or two? Or perhaps you have my standard text, **Neuroscience**? So, we take up the chase, the quest, the search of the Dark Tower.<sup>12</sup>

Am I being utterly fanciful here? The eartower, earflower, the seehearshell, the noise funnel, inviting you and me to an angekok<sup>13</sup> monologue. We face the long march together, meeting strange names in the mood of the *Odyssey*: cochlea, and Corti's organ, and stereocilia. All these somehow "working on" noise, working noise forward, inward. If you are reading along through a text then you need to be alert to its misleadings. "The spiral ganglion neurons, which are the first in the auditory pathways to fire action potentials, provide all the auditory information sent to the brain."<sup>14</sup> "Simply based on their numbers, we can infer that the majority of the information leaving the cochlea comes from inner hair cells. If that is true, what are the outer hair cells doing?"<sup>15</sup> But there is no providing of information, nor is there information leaving the cochlea: there is simply a series of forms of physical and chemical response. Simply? Well, we shall see more of that when we continue our reverie in *Field Nocturnes* 9. But you have that question to nurse, about absence of information. What is going-on? Note that this last question is the question of history: is that not a shocking discovery? Or did the first half of the last sentence slide past you? And then you may wish to brood over that other question of the text: "what are the outer hairs for?" Why should they be **for** anything? And what, anyway, is the meaning of "for"?

If you have been with me and with your hearing aids for a few hours, then we can profitably pause over another reading that you have almost certainly done previously. We are only beginning to ask what hearing is, yet does it not transform your reading of the beginning of *Method in Theology*? "Operations in the pattern are

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<sup>12</sup>See the conclusion to *Cantower IV*, "Molecules of Description and Explanation"

<sup>13</sup>An Eskimo medicine man.

<sup>14</sup>**Neuroscience**, 365.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 366.

seeing, **hearing** ..”<sup>16</sup> What was in Lonergan’s minding when he typed that word, *hearing*, in the late 1960s? I have written and spoken on occasion of conversing with him in his room in Regis College on Bayview Avenue, watching his puzzled pacing centred on what he might do about getting *Insight* into this new book. When I put the hasty index together in the last months of 1971 I was on the lookout for his effort to somehow wind in the high achievement of *Insight*. I did not index actual references to *Insight*, but only three sad and significant referential comments under the title *Insight*: on pages 7, 17, 260. But I still vividly recall the thrill of coming to his blunt categorial pointing on pages 286-7. It was years, however, before I got the marvelous pointing of the paragraph to follow: **with this enrichment “in your intellectual paws”<sup>17</sup> you can go on to re-write the first part of this book.**

With even our present little beginning - and some of you may well be quite ahead of me here - how would you re-write those final 4 lines of *Method* page 6? How would you talk of hearing? How did you previously read the word *hearing* and how do you read it now? These are deeply critical and troubling questions. There is the horror of a mythic book, *Method in Theology*, with mythic aims and achievements, that is standard currency for Lonerganism. In that mythology what is forgotten is the “rule of extreme importance,”<sup>18</sup> and there results a replacement of “a pseudo-metaphysical myth-making for scientific inquiry.”<sup>19</sup>

*Method* was written, I would say, out a sense of obligation. I had no advice for Lonergan in those years of the late 1960s, but, wiser now, perhaps I would say, Why write the book? With the energy of 1952, when he wrote, in a letter to Eric O’Connor, of

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<sup>16</sup>*Method in Theology*, 6.

<sup>17</sup>See *Phenomenology and Logic*, 357.

<sup>18</sup>*Insight*, 505[528]. The rule in our example: the form of hearing is to be known through the prolonged effort to understand.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

his ambition to carry through to “a second half” with title *Faith and Insight*, he would have written a powerful foundational book, doing for a future theology what Damascene attempted for his time. He might even have lifted forward in that book John of Damascus’ searchings of hearing: “The second sense is that of hearing. This is capable of discerning voices and sounds, of which it distinguishes high and low pitch, the degree of smoothness, and the volume. Its organs are the soft nerves leading from the brain and the apparatus of the ears. Moreover, only man and the monkey do not move their ears ...”<sup>20</sup>

But you may well say, the Damascus Arab’s project is dated; theology now has better and finer things to do than such impossible pre-renaissance renaissance reaching.

I am writing neither of the old style theology that is crippling us at present, nor of the lone ranger mentality that is associated with both it and the image of a renaissance drive. I am talking about a global omnidisciplinary collaboration that seeks to snowball forward a core adequate circulating foundation, “a rock on which one can build,”<sup>21</sup> or, in my preferred image, a rolling stone that gathers *nomos* rather than *mos*.<sup>22</sup>

But I am repeating an old tired unaccepted message. Lonergan offers “no new resource to theology”<sup>23</sup>: he “offers a key to unified science .... that is not an intrusion”<sup>24</sup> but a minding of minding, and within that minding the minding of hearing so that we may be luminous regarding and guarding “the music of the spheres.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>I quote from a translation of *De Fide Orthodoxa*, by Frederic H. Chase Jr., *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 37, p. 242, New York, Fathers of the Church Inc., 1958.

<sup>21</sup>*Method in Theology*, 19

<sup>22</sup>See Chapter 4 of *A Brief History of Tongue*.

<sup>23</sup>*Method in Theology*, 24.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid*. The dots here point to a powerful paragraph-pointing to the need for the ongoing genesis of a common *nomos* of culture.

<sup>25</sup>Shakespeare, *Pericles*, V. ii . 231.