

Field Nocturne 13

Solving the Mind-Body Problem

The original title for this *Field Nocturne* was “Bendings and Polarizations”, and we shall come to these topics, topics in the understanding of the workings of our ears, in *Field Nocturne 15*. Yet you are to find the title also in section 2 two of this essay. The use of the title there is continuous with the effort of the next essay, *Field Nocturne 14*, which deals with aspect of enriched common sense and of popularization. In the final section of *Field Nocturne 10* I indicated a more or less clear discontinuity in my efforts to initiate a new cultural seriousness in the reading of that single paragraph of *Insight* which begins “Study of the organism begins ...”. That discontinuity is the topic of the first section here. But the second section adds a twist to that search for seriousness, a twist seemingly away from seriousness, a twist that is important for those who, frankly, are not interested in, or up to, the massive effort required to climb to the possession of an adequate heuristic. Paradoxically, however, the twist is especially important for those seeking to have a shot at that strange climb.¹

1. A More or Less Clear Discontinuity

We are in very deep and troubling water here, our troubles summed up in the possible existential gap between your meaning and mine of “the more or less clear discontinuity”. Does this sound a little Goedelian? Well, indeed, ths situation is oddly Goedelian, and would involve in its clear treatment sets and aggregates of

¹I tackled that issue, but only searchingly, at the conclusion to the first of two papers written for the International Lonergan Florida Conference of 1970, “Image and Emergence: Towards an Adequate *Weltanschauung*”, late published as chapter one of *The Shaping of the Foundations*, (available now on the Website). There I wrote of the need for **philotherapy**. The philotherapy is related to the ambiguity of my title above: does it end with “I”, meaning that there is at least a “II” on the way; or does it end, and begin, with **I**, “lonely in me loneliness” (see the conclusion of note 32 below).

incompleteness theorems such as would make Goedel's original essay seem, and be, elementary.

That discouragingly complex paragraph is meant to be an encouragement. It reminds me of my first marvelous experience of teaching mathematical physics of an advance form to a first year university class. Chatting with the professor of the area, Professor Philip Gormley, in the first week, I told him that I had a good crowd in the class. His advice was magnificent: "lecture above their head for a few weeks: then you'll clear out the crowd, and you'll have a great year." That was a pragmatic way of waking up the school girls and school boys in my class to the problem of serious understanding, which many of them had not encountered before. One may do well in grade 12 simply with a good memory, especially when combined with hard work. But doing math-physics properly is a different ballpark, one that I suspect is not that familiar to grade 12 students nowadays.²

The problem here is more complex and more disturbing: it is the problem of "big frogs in little ponds" that Lonergan spoke of in an after-dinner chat during Easter of 1961: he was talking of the tradition that prevailed in theology: he had just flown up from Rome. The point briefly is, the need to break into a protected zone of myth-making, whether in physics or theology. So, the big bad world of Newton and Riemann had to be met both by my students and by theologians. My students met it quite simply: I raised the pace, the game. Theology was not such an easy matter, as Lonergan found the next week, when he returned to Rome.³ Like my students, the main body of his

²I recall Lonergan's comment in *Topics in Education*, 145: Since I am addressing educators, I would like to add a final note. It's about something I suffered from. Teaching physics without the students knowing the relevant mathematics is not teaching physics" Etc. My colleagues in physics-teaching in North America tell me that something like this is a destructive presence, even beyond highschool.

³Occasionally he spoke to me of the challenge of teaching in Rome. I recall him telling me that one way of meeting the challenge was to talk only to the brighter students: if he talked beneath them, they would not be inclined to listen. What of the less bright folk, "something is bound to trickle down".

audience was quite naive about the big bad world. Indeed, the same seemed to be true of the faculty members in the Gregorian University, for most of whom Newton and Riemann and neuroscience were in a foreign land.⁴ Was this on his mind when he answered a Boston Workshop question of the 1970s, “how much physics should a theologian know?” with the blunt and energetic responses: “Well, he should be able to read Lindsay and Margenau!”

Now, bringing the theologians to meet the issue was not for him - or for anyone - a matter of raising the pace. Indeed, a thesis that I proposed during the 50th anniversary of Lonergan’s Halifax lectures was that the “rot” set in during those lectures: the pressure of his audience’s level of education forced him to a change of pace. What might he have done during those lectures? He might, with a sufficiently cultured audience, have homed in on the conjugating that Einstein had achieved; or he might have tackled neurochemical weaknesses in Freud, Jung and company. Instead he ended up in the zone of survey and of *haute vulgarization*. At that conference I illustrated this by our doing a serious reading of two paragraphs of *Understanding and Being*, the two paragraph that end Lecture 8 in the book. And why not invite that serious reading here?

“Now, while, this notion of metaphysics is simply heuristic structure, still it is heuristic structure that aims at understanding. If there comes an answer to the question, that answer will be the fruit of understanding. Consequently, while we have to use particular types of information when we are doing metaphysics, those types of information have to be in explanatory terms. The metaphysics we are proposing will not appeal to merely descriptive knowledge but to explanatory knowledge.

For that reason, there is a fundamental difference between the notion of metaphysics we are presenting and what has become fairly common down a number of

⁴Lonergan spoke to me occasionally of Peter Hoenan being sent to teach in the Gregorian University. Hoenan had worked under Lorentz, the chap famous for the Lorentz contraction. Lonergan quoted, with a laconic smile, Lorentz’s remark about the appointment: “what a waste of a good man”.

centuries in scholastic notions of metaphysics. In Aristotle, the predicaments are clearly distinguished; but there is a list of descriptive categories. We arrive at Aristotle's categories most simply by going into the woods, meeting animals, and asking, What kind of animal is this? How big is it? What is its color? What relations does it have? And so on. They are categories of descriptive knowledge, and descriptive knowledge is science in a preliminary stage. It is something entirely different from science that has reached its explanatory stage. Aristotle himself had a very clear idea of the difference between these descriptive categories, which he sets up in an elementary work, and causes; and he thinks of science as knowledge through causes. However, there has been a tendency to conceive metaphysics as knowledge, not through causes, but through the predicaments. On the other hand, if you conceive metaphysics as concerned with the total heuristic structure of proportionate being, you must be concerned with causes and not at all with predicaments, because a heuristic structure aims at what is known through causes."⁵

What do you make of that? We are, discomfortingly, back round at the problem of existential gap. The paragraph was heard comfortably, and is read comfortably even now, even here-now, as a sound Lonergan view on metaphysics or heuristics. Indeed, does it not save one battling through chapters 15 and 16 of *Insight*? And it permits one to return to consider that, yes, I am dealing with causes when I think and write of form and matter, but now upgraded by Lonergan through the early identifications in Chapter 15 of *Insight*. I can even return to thinking and teaching and writing about, for instance, the mind-body problem in the same old same old way. So, I conveniently miss the pointing at the beginning of section 7 of chapter 15: we are now ready to get down to serious empirical work controlled by an intussuscepted metaphysics, which itself -

⁵*Understanding and Being*, University of Toronto Press, 1990, 198-9.

myself - will be refined by that down-getting.⁶

Now we may sharpen and heighten our game here by noting where we are: we are in the second half of page 250 of *Method in Theology*, and when the activities magnificently described on that page become a culture of care, the *we* will normatively include the followers of Riemann and the students of neuroscience. But at the moment it is just you and I. And I am doing the talking at the moment, talking out my position. "A further objectification of horizon is obtained when each investigator operates on the materials by indicating the view that would result from developing what he regards as positions and by reversing what he regards as counter-positions."⁷

That is what I am at here-now. What are the materials? Proximately they are what I have - but shabbily - *assembled, completed, compared, reduced, classified, and selected*, regarding the activity of human hearing.

What is my position regarding human hearing, and regarding the understanding of human hearing, and regarding regarding? The four mentions of regarding are relevant to me and my statement of position, for self-luminousness is central to my position. Indeed, if I am aspiring to the fourth stage of meaning, it is the heart and soul of my position; and it is so literally: my heart and soul, my body and minding. And I am one who is "at pains not to conceal his tracks, but to lay all his cards on the table."⁸ I am "one person dealing with other persons" in a zone that is the care of the symphonic life of the cosmos, and I, we, cannot afford to have that splinter into "a series of zones from the ego or *moi intime* to the outer rind of the *persona*,"⁹ or the series of zones that is

⁶In the beginning of section 7 of Chapter 15 of *Insight* Lonergan writes "to prepare our statement of the integral heuristic structure that we have named metaphysics, attention must now be directed to genetic method".

⁷*Method in Theology*, 250, lines 24-28.

⁸*Ibid*, 193.

⁹*Insight*, 470[495].

music and mathematics, politics and poetry. Nor are we engaged in some scholarly venture. "Nothing could be worse than a detailed scholarly analysis of erudition, interpretation, complication. Now is the time for simplicity. Now is the time for, dare I say it, kindness. I thought being extremely smart would take care of it. But I see that I have been found out. I'm scared. Oh Oh God, I want I want to hide. I just want to curl up in a little ball."¹⁰ This is not a time when one " keeps some matters entirely to oneself, and refuses to even to face others."¹¹

"This is, of course, the transcendental turn. But it turns not to any isolated self but to the self as emergent within an intersubjective matrix, as discovering the meaning of its gesture in the response made by another to the gesture."¹²

This is a piece of my position on regarding and hearing self and others as I accept in *completion* the brutal demands of those closing lines of page 250 of *Method in Theology*, and reject their rejection. What is your view of that brutal page? Might you, instead, be comfortable going out into the woods, regarding the animals, considering a distant tree falling unheard?

But my position, of course, involves more. It is, for instance, a cherishing of pages 286-7 of *Method in Theology*, a cherishing that after fifty years of struggling is more a matter of knowing than of believing.¹³ And so we come to my operative position here-

¹⁰I quote from the 2001 film *Wit*. Emma Thompson, who acted the speaker, a cancer-dying Donne scholar, wrote the screenplay - with Mike Nichols, the director, from a play by Margaret Edson.

¹¹*Insight*, 470[495].

¹²Lonergan, "The Example of Gibson Winter," *A Second Collection*, 190.

¹³I note an important addition to my version of page 287 of *Method in Theology*. I would add a number (10) to Lonergan's list, the inclusion within the foundational perspective of functional specialization. Lonergan certainly thus added it by writing the book. Why was it not included here? He was, tiredly but cunningly, trying to put *Insight* back into the challenge. Putting it back had been a deep concern for him. I recall him pacing his room in the mid-1960s, saying to me and to himself, "What am I going to do? I can't put all of *Insight* into chapter one" of the book *Method* that he was about to begin.

now, on :“seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting.”¹⁴ For I take seriously that part of page 287 of *Method in Theology* which claims that “from such a broadened basis one can go on to a developed account of the”¹⁵ chapters of the book that form the shabby descriptive “Background.”¹⁶

And on I go, not to an adequate developed account, but to a sketching of a communal task for those who consider Lonergan significant. The communal task is not for everyone, but for the Tower People talked about previously in so many places and ways, but particularly in the *Cantowers*, and most recently in *Field Nocturnes CanTower* 45 “Eau Canada.”¹⁷ There are people genuinely interested in what Lonergan offers, but do not belong in that Tower of Able, or to the zone of metascience. Indeed, these first generations of Lonergan students were and are ill-equipped for the venture, the Dark Tower.¹⁸ But if you find yourself, in the privacy of the *moi intime*, psychically leaning towards curling up in a little ball, a diffident *anima* who earlier fancied having a message for mankind,¹⁹ might you not encourage a later generation to get out of the little pond?

What, then, on my position, is the mind-body problem? It is certainly not the problem that is splashed around in the little pond of dualists, vitalists, materialist, whatever. Is it a problem for the neuroscientists? It is, in so far as anything that displays patterns, anything that thus works with regularly, is a problem: it poses a problem of

¹⁴*Method in Theology*, 6.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷One of the two essays of the new series, written ahead of time. , available already in the Website. See the conclusion of *Field Nocturne 10*.

¹⁸Cantower IV deals with the Dark Tower of Browning’s poem in a feminist context.

¹⁹A twist here on Lonergan ”an ego with a message for mankind is linked to a diffident anima” (*Insight*, 194[217]).

understanding. Then the issue is, having the right approach, which surely is having a verified adequate heuristics?

Now at this stage I see only the option to halt abruptly. For, presenting my position, in the present year of 2008, as a verified, self-verified, adequate heuristics, would mean something like weaving *Insight* around the tasks of *Completion, Comparison*, etc: a matter for you and I effectively reviewing the challenge, “one has not only to read *Insight* but also to discover oneself in oneself.”²⁰ The lengthy weaving will not be necessary in a hundred years or so, when a Standard Model will be in self-control in the Tower of Able. But at present there is no Tower, and there seems to me - again, my position - that there is little luminous self-control. “You just have to admire Aristotle’s subtlety”²¹: but doing the sweaty homework is quite another affair, love affair. “To this end, there have to be invented appropriate symbolic images of the relevant chemical and physical processes; in these images there have to be grasped”²² We are back, as you see from the footnote, in our selected paragraph. Lonergan is all too compact on the invention and on the pattern of grasping, as I have been for the past fifty years.²³ What is needed in these next generations is, not some type of deconstruction, but simply decompacting in a humble widespread pedagogical style. Yesterday a colleague quoted back to me something I had written in an e-mail which lifted his mind and lifts mine now: “we are patterned chemicals with a nerve-smear of spirit, reaching out in the dark”. The reaching has to be stumbling, bumbling, humbling: “strictly speaking, it is not true that insight is a grasp of form; rather insight is the grasp of the object in an inward aspect such that the mind, pivoting on the insight, is able to conceive, not

²⁰*Method in Theology*, 260.

²¹I quote from note 4 of Appendix B of *Phenomenology and Logic*, 325. It is part of my free translation of pieces from Lonergan that are related to archival files of the lectures of 1957.

²²*Insight*, 464[489].

²³I shall tackle this topic in *Field Nocturne 15*.

without labor, the philosophic concepts of form and matter."²⁴ Well, what is your honest position on this business? "Now is the time for simplicity. Now is the time for, dare I say it, kindness."

So, again my position: it seems to me too soon for a communal appreciation of this facet of finitude: there is a discontinuity perhaps a millennium ahead. Let neurochemical searchings help us stumblingly along. "Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyesI am getting along nicely in the dark. See now. All the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end."²⁵

What is the mind-body problem? It is all the time, since seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting emerged, without you and beyond you, and ever shall be, world without end, a solution, not a problem.²⁶ And, in the past seven million years or so, African-there, with a new cosmic twist, since patterned chemicals and animal nerves became smeared with a lonely cosmic bent that reaches out - or in, or heren-ow, nowhere - beyond the cosmos to the band that bred it. It reaches out in a manner that is to remain incomplete, world without end.²⁷ But there is to be a more or less clear discontinuity, a fourth stage glory, before, bemixed with, bemused by, the eschatonic.

Should we re-read, now, the first paragraph of this section, Finneganwise, in a reverie past Eve and Adam? Always ending and beginning at the end of note 34 below?

"We are in very deep and troubling water here, our troubles summed up in the

²⁴Lonergan, *Verbum*, 38.

²⁵James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Penguin, 1968, 42-3; 1986, 31.

²⁶"An intelligent solution to the problem of living in a given environment" (*Insight*, 265[290]); "biological species are a series of solutions to the problem of systematizing coincidental aggregates of chemical processes" (*Insight*, 263[288-9]).

²⁷This is a very remote and wonderful theorem within a mature eschatology. We remain developmental in the Big Clasp, everlastingly reaching for the eternally elusive comprehension of God. Is not this the mind-body problem and solution at its most exotic?

possible existential gap between your meaning and mine of 'the more or less clear discontinuity'. Does this sound a little Goedelian? Well, indeed, this situation is oddly Goedelian, and would involve in its clear treatment sets and aggregates of incompleteness theorems such as would make Goedel's original essay seem, and be, elementary."

2. Bendings and Polarizations

Before moving on I must return to my image of the class in mathematical physics which the professor encouraged me to reduce in size before pushing on. The most evident issue here is, Where does that leave you? Where does that leave those interested in Lonergan's pointings yet not geared to the tough journey that parallels, in Lonergan studies, the road to joining those working in the Standard Model? Curiously, even paradoxically, my teaching life has been committed to such people, indeed mainly to young women whose bents were to move away from what we consider academic things, polarized then to a common sense life, even if some of them became lawyers or doctors or teachers. You notice now, perhaps, the ambiguity of the title of this section? Its primary reference is to bendings of hairs and electric polarizations that occur, are achieved, in the inner ear. But it seems good to pause over the broader meanings of those words used already in this first paragraph.

Following the parallel with mathematical physics, do you, or the less competent or interested, now back off from the present enterprise, which frankly looks to a future in which philosophic education is not just a trivial muddle, a commonsense distortion, an achievement of general bias? Not at all: and this is an appeal to you, to them, to carry on, but at your and their own pace. What that pace is, that has to emerge quietly, and the next essay on "The Clever Body", is geared to help discover that pace, as well as to help towards distinctions of positive paces of thinking and of living.

So, there is the positive pace of serious heuristics that is to bring forth slowly what I call the Tower People, a community working collaboratively - and globally, and

multidisciplinarily - within what I call a *standard model* of human heuristics. But the penultimate achievement of that work and that Tower of Able is the good global pilgrim life. So, I think of my own recent venture out of the Tower into a boys school in Australia. My concern was primarily with teachers and administrators, but I had the privilege of teaching the occasional class to boys ranging from 14 to 18. The problem then was, not to point them to some theoretic life, but to enliven their commonsense living.²⁸ The mood of that pointing is captured in what, or should I say, the what, written on the black or white board by me at the beginning of most classes: **What is a Schoolboy**. Sometimes the first reaction was the remark, "Sir, you left out the question mark". To which the reply was "I didn't: there is none". And we would take it from there. Where would we take it? That depended on age. At any age, an appeal to games lifted us all up existentially. **What**, in soccer, is a goal keeper, especially when a penalty shot is involved. **What** is a penalty taker. Yes.

It would take a lengthy essay to catch the rhythms of the classes that followed, and each teacher of such a class has to find his or her pace with whatever group they work with. What is a goal keeper; what is a receiver of a tennis serve. Yes. One has to mime, muse, amuse. The goal keeper hunched, with hunches, on the goal line, the tennis player hovering wisely around the base line are **Whats**, what-toes poised for take-off.²⁹ And so on, with penalty takers, servers, chess players.

²⁸The exception to my teaching there is worth mentioning, since it is central to the effective lift of present economics out of its pseudo-scientific status. I found that the upper grades were quite capable of taking in the need and nature of the two flows on economic reality and in its analysis. The class I gave there, more or less word for word, became a piece of chapter 2 of Part Three of Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas*. See, on the effective transformation of present economics and its grade twelve teaching, the essay *Prehumous 1*, "Teaching High-School Economics. A Common Quest Manifesto".

²⁹Right from the start of my teaching career the what-to-do question has been central. It is obviously central to Lonergan: what-to-do defines him deeply, and was luminous in him. When he compacted his view of the transcendental dynamic in *Method in Theology* (see note 31 below for an *Insight* expression) he was thinking of "be intelligent" in terms not of historical study or

The senior boys were fascinated, and to some extent amusingly embarrassed, by my use of what the dating process as a zone illuminated by self-attention. The dating process was a standard example - a standard model? - for the classes to young ladies in Mt. St. Vincent University during my twenty years there. The problem was, The search for Cosmo Polis - or for the young men, Cosma Polis; but here I stay with the search for Cosmo Polis. This, typically, was a Friday class discussion, since the young ladies were then fermenting towards escaping the Campus for the evening. Sometimes we traveled downtown together on the same bus, and one could sense the vibrations of expectations in the radiance of perfumed invitations and dress codes. The search was on, or being carried on, the lonely reach for mate.

Again, a topic to be developed personally, by teacher, by you. "What do you want?"³⁰ "What defines a man?"³¹ The wonderful thing about the illustration is that it has a power to self-reveal by its attention to the revelation of the other. Especially when that revelation of the other, in sad truthfulness, is comic. A favorite quotation for me, from Lonergan, in such contexts was from his brief and powerful reflection on humour, which includes a paragraph worth quoting fully now.

scientific searching but of the bent towards the future. "Progress proceeds from originating value, from subjects being their true selves by observing the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible **Being intelligent includes a grasp of hitherto unnoticed or unrealized possibilities**". The bent seems sadly lost in the slogan as it is repeated in the Lonergan school. I try to remedy the matter, first by noting and explicating the modal distinction between the two what-questions (see Appendix A of *Phenomenology and Logic*, where I make use of my diagrams of the 1960s), secondly by adding in before "Be responsible" a transcendental such as "Be foresightful" or "Be adventurous". See *Joistings 3*, "The What-to-do question" or, if you are up to it, tackle Thomas' brilliant self-attentive work on the matter in questions 6-17 of the *Prima Secundae*. See now note 34 below.

³⁰I recall the first words of Jesus in John's *Gospel*: 1: 38.

³¹*The Bhagavad-Gita*, II, 54 (translated by Barbara Stoler Millar, Bantam Books, 1986) I am recalling Arjuna's conversation with Krishna: see my reflection on it in chapter 2 of *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders* (1990), a book available on the Website.

“The concrete being of man,³² then, is being in process. His existing lies in developing. His unrestricted desire to know heads him ever towards a known unknown. His sensitivity matches the operator of his intellectual advance with a capacity and a need to respond to a further reality than meets the eye and to grope his way towards it. Still, this basic, indeterminately directed dynamism has its ground in potency; it is without the settled assurance and efficacy of form; it tends to be shouldered out of the busy day, to make its force felt in the tranquility of darkness, in the solitude of loneliness, in the shattering upheavals of personal or social disaster.”³³

So, the young ladies and I envisaged the arrival at the date. Our interest was in the state of Cosmo Polis. The interest had to bubble forward with a mixture of anticipations, sadness, humour, frustration. And we repeated it on Mondays, recalling the actual events. So: was Cosmo attentive? He already had a beer or two ... she might as well have worn diesel oil instead of the expensive perfume. Etc. I leave you to fill in the climb through the levels, but with a pause on the missing transcendental: was he adventurous, foresightful? What might he say, might he have said to the question, “What are our plans for the evening?” “The usual”?

In such a way a teacher can cater to the bent and polarizations of common sense. But I would note that such catering is part of the teacher’s own bent and polarization and pedagogical output whatever the level of ambition or attainment of students, calling the students to the same bent. Otherwise self-appropriation is likely to become, in a following generation, nominal, a veneer, one moreover shared by a group, a school, so becoming a decayed destructive reality.³⁴

³²Of course, with young ladies, we had to rescue the quotation from maleness.

³³*Insight*, 625[648]. The present series is primarily a commentary on the single paragraph beginning “study of the organism”. But this paragraph, too, deserves a like lengthy commentary: And it certainly merits hours of brooding. See note 29 above.

³⁴I hope to get back to this topic both in the next essay here and in the sequence of essays that are to begin with *Field Nocturnes CanTower 42*. There is a Proustian attitude that need to be

But we come back to that topic in *Field Nocturne 14*. Meantime, what of our interest in bendings and polarizations within the inner ear?

Perhaps, whether you wish to follow it up or not, I might place that interest in a broadly illuminating context by recalling the existential context of the second of the *Cantower* series, titled, "Sunflowers, Speak to Us of Growing". That existential context was the morning walkabout of my wife and me in the garden, greeting spring's springing. There is the wonder of the changes, the rising up of a seed so that it now looks down on you, and you may look up at it and ask, "how do you do it, how do you work?".

The bending and the polarizations in the inner ear are works that you do. Even if you are not up to asking seriously "how do I thus work?" at least there is the possibility of you wondering at the wonder of the work done so quietly, work that lifts breeze-sounds and bird-song into a cranial nano-presence, patterned towards a cherishing minding.

incarnated as a permanent and flower-growing **Poise**, a *Poosition*. So, back you go now, round again, hunched again as a goalkeeper, poised for a first serve in tennis: begin freshly to discover your self as a what-to-do, "Loonely in me loneness" (James Joyce. *Finnegans Wake*, the concluding paragraph, leading up to the first paragraph).