

Field Nocturne 17
More Than Admiring Aristotle

1. Context, Topic, Epilodge

The title of this essay, you may remember, is a reference to the text of Lonergan quoted previously and here referenced fully again.¹ The challenge we face now is to more than admire by moving to imitation, yet in an imitation that goes beyond Aristotle, even that goes beyond Lonergan? Is this arrogant? Lonergan points beyond himself in many ways, and one way is his suggested way of linguistic feedback, mentioned twice by him in *Method in Theology*.² He points very much beyond himself in his discovery of functional collaboration and was satisfied to leave that beyondness to later generations. But that is not our topic in this essay, whereas something like linguistic feedback is. Is it a topic? It is more than a topic, unless you lift the Indo-European meaning of *top-* or the Greek meaning, into a strange largeness that places us together here: then it is not more than a topic, for *topic* would mean for us, herenow, nowhere, a massively shared field-hope, field-hold, a common reach of both our horizons. *Mean for us* is evidently the trouble herenow, and I do not wish us to venture into that trouble immediately, a trouble that would push us to a fantasy about the Epilodge³ and the Tower of Able.

So, I would narrow our focus to our getting together, in, over, round and (about)³ the last three paragraphs of the previous essay. We are trying to find our place, *topos*, in the total cosmos, finite and infinite, from Big Bang to Big Clasp: are we not? And, in that

¹“One can only marvel at Aristotle’s subtlety.” *Lonergan, The Triune God: Systematics*, 581.

²*Method in Theology*, 88, note 34. The second mention is missing from the book, but present in the typescript. Line 12 of page 92 should read, “linguistic **feed-back is achieved, that is in the measure that** explanation....”: the missing words are in boldface.

³*Epilodge* is the title of *Cantower 21*, which parallels the Epilogue of *Insight*.

strange large molecular mood of *moi intime* I would have us tackle an “apparently trifling problem”⁴, the problem of you and I coming, not face to face with, but wonderound, a neuroblot. Already herenow we are in trouble: I am stretching in my elder to surround your neuromesh and your amoeboid neuroblob with print and poise that is vastly strange, an alien world that nonetheless is the real. I can only hope that some of you bear with me, sufficiently neurostirred to hold to a Yes, bracketing your monologue with positive poise, like Molly Bloom in her monologue.⁵ Karl Jung said of that monologue, “only the devil’s grandmother could do it”: but God’s grand child, which you are, could and can do it, if so called, cauled. ” ‘Womb? Weary? Going to dark bed there was a square round Sinbad the Sailor roc’s auk’s egg in the night of the bed of all auks of the rocs of Darkinbed the Brightdayler. Where?’⁶ And so I invite you to enter the cave, not of Plato, but of your own senseability, your own solitary noosphere.”⁷ The proximate context of this going to dark bed, bedder⁸ or bedbug, is evidently the previous essay, with its puzzling three concluding paragraphs. I add

⁴I recall that reflection on Descartes of the first paragraph of *Insight*.

⁵The final chapter of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, with its concluding Yeses.

⁶*Ulysses*, the text before Molly’s monologue.

⁷I am quoting the end of chapter 4 of my little introduction to self, *A Brief History of Tongue. From Big Bang to Coloured Whole*, (Axial Publishing, 1998, 137. It leads to the final chapter, titled “General Method” which is indeed the best proximate context for the adventure of this essay. That chapter echos the simpler chapter 5 of *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations*, (available on the Website), “The Inside-Out of Radical Existentialism”. I see no way of you avoiding these contexts, if you are seriously interested in being an associate of the Tower Community.

⁸*Bedder* names a plant suitable for a garden bed. You should find such a suitable plant or bug for the reflection, self-digestion, we are pushing towards here. Th effort requires existential realism and you may find it in the garden of in a stable. Perhaps the tree calls? “The tree, insofar as it is considered as a thing itself, stands within a pattern of intelligible relations and offers no foothold for imagination. The difference between the tree and the electron [or the amoeba?] is simply that the tree, besides being explained, also can be observed and described.” (*Insight*, 250[275]).

those three paragraphs herenow, after one other paragraph, but the order is reversed.

Does the reversal help you to pause, with this print-within, suspended behind your eyeballs, this print Englishing your puzzlement, no, not out there on the bright page, but dark-bedded in brain-patterns needing rescue from bright paging, paging the Grace or Tom or Harriet that you are, now here, nowhere but in there - yet not in and not there - patterned chemical that you are, skin-confined, nano-signaled cherish shifts in a given that does not show those shifts in nano-cherishment but is simply given, a resting arresting so that you are undefined “desire regarding the flow of empirical consciousness,”⁹ needing perhaps prolonged philotherapy if you are to enter the Dark Tower?¹⁰ So, we reverse the three paragraphs¹¹: the last shall be first, but you have read them before and may read them in any order, the middle first, asking what’s what. Asking? “You have to distinguish between ‘him meaning it’ and ‘him meant’”¹² Not something achieved at a first read, self-read, read shaken in the wind of animal extroversion. “No matter. Fail again. Try again. Fail better”.

Now, unless you are very strange, that last paragraph is mildly or wildly disconcerting. We have seemingly shifted from a happy musing about the amoeba to odd questions about what, what’s what, and to questions of therapy. But were not the happy musings a topic? And is that not a matter, a mutter, of what’s what? And are there not blocks to face, whether you are clear about the mutter - through “familiarity

⁹*Insight*, 383[407].

¹⁰See the conclusion to Cantower 4, “Molecules of Description and Explanation”.

¹¹I leave them otherwise unchanged, even though in the first paragraph in this new order there is a reference to *Field Nocturne 17*, which is a type of self-reference. The deeper problem is precisely self-reference, but not just a Goedlian business: it is the business of identity as heart of knowing; in finitude what is named *intentional* identity.

¹²Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 314. His reflections in the book on ‘subject as subject’, and on ‘horizon reaching for the field’ are grist for our mill. See the index there, under *Field* and under *Subject: as subject*.

with human intelligence and its properties"¹³ - or whether you are at the bottom of the dry well with Grace? Let us pause, then, both of us, and first, in *Field Nocturnes 17*, see how we might help to get you - presuming you are there¹⁴ - out of the dry well. In *Field Nocturnes 18* I shall be realistic about the effectiveness of such help and focus attention on the broader effective way out of the dry well. And - recalling our musings, in *Field Nocturnes 15*, about contexts - that focused attention can twist up and round the amoeba, the little flower *Chlamydomona*, the little fly on the wall: where are they all, what are they all, all in all?¹⁵

What what? What might I, you, mean by either **what** there? What do you mean by *what* normally? Best perhaps find that **out - or in -**, find yourself, by finding the sort of what that you don't mean: "Hi, what's new?", you say, but your heart isn't in it: you are in a hurry to get past an intruder in your busy day. It is more likely to come from the heart when **you** are the crisis centre. What am I going to do? - when you are not, with those words, just wringing your hands, or ringing the changes on old mouthings - can be a molecular reach in you for a desperately-needed answer,¹⁶ a solution that comes - perhaps suddenly, unexpectedly, but not without minding - to calm troubled water-molecules. The minding, of course, may be someone else's minding: your shrink

¹³*Insight*, 441[466].

¹⁴If you are happily out of the dry well, then you have the opportunity of comparing notes on strategies of rescue, and if you are even into the topic of *Field Nocturne 18* you will be able to shift the comparison into the *Comparison of Method in Theology* page 250, and so we would roll forward to a larger view and operation of rescue.

¹⁵So I would point you to the excellence, the absolute value - despite perhaps the appearance of "utter uselessness" - of these "noble and heroic deeds" of our little puzzlings, pausing Proust-wise over amoeba or flower or fly. "Flower in the crannied wall, / I pluck you out of the crannies, / I hold you here, root and all, in my hand, / Little flower - but if I could understand / What you are, root and all, and all in all, / I should know what God and man is". The references here are to *For A New Political Economy*, where I also cite this six-line poem of Tennyson referred to by Lonergan in the text there.

¹⁶Old English: *and-*, against + *swerian*, to swear.

helps you out, first by helping you to get a what for the mess you reluctantly acknowledge. Just as the mess may be “linked with a refusal to understand, so its cure is an insight, a ‘lightening flash of illumination’.”¹⁷ But it is not a cure until the fat molecules sing. “The neurotic turns to the analyst or counselor”¹⁸ but the concrete solution is a blocked molecular shuffle, a “therapy blocked by misconceptions of what one spontaneously is.”¹⁹ And one spontaneously is what.

Later we will insideout the problem, but for the present an upsidedowning, upside-owning of it, is enough oddness. Matter takes the strange and wonderous shape that we call aliveness, alive. *Taking shape*: that is a peculiar and puzzling phrase: a snatching out of thin chance, a bold fold in. How could big molecules do such, make such a move? But here we are big molecules moving with and within a certain shape. What is that shape, that shaping-up? We call the shaping up different names for its different moves: “feeds, moves, responds....” Now let us get back down, a down-sighing, to the crowd of molecules. Are you with me here? A useful imaging is to, so to speak, take the skin off your image, leaving only the wriggly inner lines. After all, the skin, the outside closed curve, is just a matter - a mutter - of your imagination. All “that is there” is a mess of aggregated molecular activities. But, not a mess, not just an aggregate like a heap of bones or stones. What, then? Yes, then: What!

2. “A Sheer Leap into the Void”²⁰

For the existential subject to which Lonergan refers there it is herenow not so much a leap as a strange and quiet withdrawal that does not withdraw, but rather a communal business that is not busy, a leisured sharing with a positioned poised people

¹⁷*Insight*, 201[224].

¹⁸*Method in Theology*, 34.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, in the footnote to the previously-quoted text.

²⁰*Insight*, 539[562].

leaning into, in, you from the Tower. But there is at present no Tower but you, most likely at the bottom of a dry unwell, battered there by the binocular molecules of a cultural superego that talks and teases you all ways out into being a large animal sensitive to a sound surround, sound there in threat or treat. The sound surround now includes the patterns of sensability called print, which you English leisurely, losing my meaning in translation. How might we remedy the loss, lift you, leap you, out of the sound surround so as to be luminously within “your own solitary noosphere.”²¹

Yes, then: what? What is the entry. But what is a name, a dummy-type name, imageless in reference yet the referred meshed in the neural patterns made vivid in their being named - red, tilting, sour, soft, How might I unpack that dumb dummy sentence so as to leave you in your true home alone, a bent called *what* even now **about** the neural print? A **whatabout** that is a twirling up and about quantal quirks and quarks and all the aggregated uprisings thereof. I might unpack it in a later generation, with the support of a community at home, or trying genuinely to be at home, in that deep isolation where alone objectivity is found. So I am back with the Cosmopolis problem, the community of the “not easy”.²²

Still, you might be strangely with me in being with yourself, hugging your print-patterned minding quietly but in shock. A slim hope, a slim statistic. The broader historical hope is a tower hope. And that tower hope is for a much more than admiring Aristotle: it is a leap beyond his hylemorphism to an authentic and pragmatic aggregormism. But the continuity is there, of a fact of being to become humanly

²¹I am quoting the end of chapter 4 of my little introduction to self, *A Brief History of Tongue. From Big Bang to Coloured Whole*, (Axial Publishing, 1998, 137. It leads to the final chapter, titled “General Method” which is indeed the best proximate context for the adventure of this essay. That chapter echos the simpler chapter 5 of *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations*, (available on the Website), “The Inside-Out of Radical Existentialism”. I see no way of you avoiding these contexts, if you are seriously interested in being an associate of the Tower Community.

²²*Insight* 241[266].

communal in its luminous being-known as being the other by identity. That is the whole crux and cruxifaction of the thesis about “knowing by identity”.²³

If you are indeed strangely with me then you have been on this strange road of unreality for some time, reading yourself with made readings that lift you in and out of Plato’s cave till you are luminously blue in the nerve, tasting in the inner tongue. And if your straining has carried you into that comeabout poise, that no-country for old men and women of the tower, then you may now-here be smiling at a feeble but audacious attempts to word forth briefly directions to that cosmic country.

I begin this fifth paragraph and only now admit that I have, so to speak, changed my tune and my tone. How not to repeat myself, that has been a problem. But in the middle of time off between section 1 and 2 I left myself behind, a freshly startled stranger, in a shock-shift around the word *vivens* and what I wrote a little earlier. Half-way through my seventy seventh year, I could not tell myself of last month about this. What then might I write here? That I eventually found out what is really to be meant by the word I coined in 1969, *aggreformism*?

Perhaps before the end of the series, before *Field Nocturne 41*, I may have nudged some few to the strange climbing needed. That seems at present the only pragmatic way to go: bringing to bear the fuller view in treating of the neuroscientific details. You may note a peculiar halt in that sentence. The halt relates to the meaning of bringing to bear. Yes, it means that I am bringing to bear, but the relevant meaning here is that I bring you to bear, to conceive of in your skin-what, the relevant concept of aggreformism, in, within, your finding the form and forms of the details that, in much contemporary reflection, do not belong intrinsically: full stop. Another halting sentence. Do not belong to what? There is the problem. Do the details of the aggregates not belong to the form that informs them? Of course, we have here the cousin of an old problem that Thomas struggled with, for example, when he puzzles over the human form being vegetative.

²³*Verbum*, see the index under *Knowledge*, various entries.

You might puzzle as we go along about related notions of unity, but giving Thomas' questions a fresh twist that would bring his searchings uncomfortably into present discourse. Is our thinking towards decisions in some sense vegetative? Is his eating and her drinking somehow intrinsic to, in the mesh of, their what-skin?

But to answer such questions in the new context, a new Kontext, requires that you find that what-skin in a new luminous self-presence.