

## Field Nocturne 31

### And Opwords

This Field Nocturne, its direction, its content, its title, come as a surprise to me this morning at 3.30 a.m. I do not normally wake this early: sometimes I begin my climbing as late as 5.00 a.m. I mention these odd times because<sup>1</sup> it is part of this morning oplift, but I would note that, while I would normally claim something like “I caught this morning mornings minikin,”<sup>2</sup> a little thing, this morning there seems to be a pointing of more consequence. But the roots belong to yesterday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, and to yesterday’s circumstances. Had it something to do with Martin Luther King’s having a dream, and it being recalled by Barak Obama’s acceptance speech of nomination? That was there, but the circumstance were more inner, innerwordfleshed, the puzzle of a certain self-fulfilling attitude that deadens this print for most of my younger colleagues. Yes, that is the heart of this molecular surge.

Now I have been round this topic before, even in this series.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the treatment in this series was perhaps the best treatment up till now. What springs to mind is Beethoven’s comment when a friend noted that the applause for the first performance of the 8<sup>th</sup> symphony was so much more robust than for the 7<sup>th</sup>. Beethoven’s reply: “that is because it is so much better” Now, for instance, I have a much better grip, and am much better gripped, of the, by the, **meaning of circumstances**.<sup>4</sup> I allow myself

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<sup>1</sup>There is a deeper **because** to be dealt with explicitly and luminously by later foundational normativity and made thus operational in later dialectic: the essential inclusion of autobiographic narrative in one’s positioning. Positioning can of course, be casual, but in its full formality it is in the world defined by page 250 of *Method in Theology*.

<sup>2</sup>G.M.Hopkins’ “Windhover” is recognizable here, with a twist..

<sup>3</sup>I should draw attention to that early treatment here, which stands out as odd for the reader - does it not? - at that early stage: *Field Nocturne 4*: “Lonergan’s 1954 View of Theology in the New Context”.

<sup>4</sup>I am thinking here of Ortega y Gasset’s emphasis on circumstances. Useful might be my essay “*Insight after Forty Years: Towards a Luminous Darkness of Circumstances*”, available in

to put this in boldface, recalling earlier uses of that strategy. Like **whathere** or **whatthere** it is deeply inner and existential, a self-presence. It is a being luminously within the meaning, where meaning is not just an outgoing of subject but an ingoing of subject, an epilodging,<sup>5</sup> a fresh flesh being at home in the cosmic call's chemical zeal.<sup>6</sup> Meaning has that positive energetic sense<sup>7</sup> from the evidence of universal instrumentality, but that positive sense is a hardwon minnesinging within adult growth,<sup>8</sup> A **comeabout** circuminassing of the evidence.<sup>9</sup>

The mention of **comeabout** here brings to my circumstantial minding a struggle of the past two days to get the Lonergan biography in focus. I wrote at some length to my collaborator, Pierrot Lambert, of the core problem, and indeed put that problem in enlarged boldface, which I leave in my present quoting of myself. "Lonergan is the first human to have arrived at that **comeabout**, and it was such a multifaceted leap that no one was capable of following him in his own century. .... **What then of his biography? The meaning of his life eludes us until that life is effective in these next centuries. A serious biohistorical account is, then, beyond**

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the Website Archival section.

<sup>5</sup>Cantower 21's title is "Epilodge"; the Cantower parallels the Epilogue of *Insight*.

<sup>6</sup>See the conclusion of *Insight*.700[722]. Also the conclusion to chapter 2 of *Lack in the Beingstalk*.

<sup>7</sup>You are, I suspect, mistaken in your reading of that "energetic sense": energy is that odd emptiness in being that yet craves infolding.

<sup>8</sup>I think of the writings of that strange 13<sup>th</sup> century Beguine mystic, Hadewijch of Antwerp on the topic of **Minne**. "Minne is everything", she writes. See the essay *Prehumous 8*, "Foundational Prayer 5: Mysticism"

<sup>9</sup>One may think of lifting *Insight* chapter 19, sections 7 and 9, into a Trinitarian fullness of the fourth stage of meaning.

us for some centuries.”<sup>10</sup>

And so I muse again,<sup>11</sup> but for another firstflesh time, over the odd placing of *Field Nocturne 4*, over its prolepsis, over its concluding paragraph which I now quote, and of course include its footnotes.

“I began these *Nocturnes* by noting two key and neglected pages in Lonergan’s works: page 250 of *Method in Theology* and page 464[489] of *Insight*. I already wrote a couple of hundred pages on that single page of *Method*, in the hope of fostering collaboration.<sup>12</sup> Very little happened in the way of collaboration. But perhaps a few hundred pages on a single paragraph will catch some attention?<sup>13</sup> Their positive content, however, is the revelation of one piece of the massive explanatory heuristic that came from the mind of the man who invented the **comeabout**<sup>14</sup> that is to dictate the standard model of methodical thinking in the millennia to come.”

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<sup>10</sup>There is a page of text between the two pieces of this quotation. The text, and the struggle will turn up again, I would hope freshly fleshly, in *Field Nocturne 116*, the second last essay of that series, nominally dealing, once again, with chapter 16 of *Insight*, but really focusing on this problem of the Comeabout Man. By then perhaps - November 2011 - there will be a **comeabout** woman in the wings?

<sup>11</sup>Note 2, above, was an earlier younger musing, some hours ago. I should, indeed, draw attention, as I said there, but without the indeed. What does the indeed add? It is an in-doing of the type I talk about here, a minikin, a minnekin, *minneken* (Old Dutch).

<sup>12</sup>That effort began as a sincere interest of an Australian group in collaborating on the topic of collaboration. It led me to abandon the *Cantower* project two-fifths of the way through. But it also led me to push forward in my commentary on that single page of *Method*.

<sup>13</sup>See *Insight* 733[755] for Lonergan’s attention-seeking remark about shabby Catholic thinking, one that did not get serious attention. One might consider the next long *Field Nocturne* as a another longer shot at a wake-up call about what he talked of to me in Easter 1961, of the closure of Catholic minding after Trent, of “big frogs in little ponds”.

<sup>14</sup>*Insight*, 514[537]. That key text is worth recalling: “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 differentiated by certain conjugate potencies, forms, and acts grounding certain laws and frequencies.”

The last sentence there needs twisting towards lifting **youwhathere, whathere**. I grasp now so much better that the massive explanatory heuristic came **in** the mind of the man who invented **comeabout**. But you do not: unless you had already grasped it. It is like the leap from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> symphony of either Beethoven or Bruckner. Should I write the heart of Bruckner's 8<sup>th</sup> to refresh your memory? So, in old tonic solfa, I write doh - me fah so so , where there is an octave leap down between the two sos, and the doh is symbolized as doubled. Do you remember, like the little phrase of Vinteuille in Proust's remembering? How does one come in mind the come in mind of the comeabout man?

Is it perhaps aesthetically and aspirationally communicated by recalling Patrick Burke's use of the odd word *dehiscence* in an early ramble regarding *Field Nocturne 30*, "Onwords" which remains to be written after this - certainly now a different onwords after this opwords - I had jotted down, repeating a footnote, "**Burke, 97**. Dehiscence is perhaps an unfamiliar word meaning **a bursting or splitting open, as of a pod discharging its contents**. In *Field Nocturne 30*, we shall follow up the twists of this quotation towards a **whathere** glimpse that is not posed on the visible but poised in the invisible."

There also, among my scribbles is the remark to myself: **but the issue is the incast of the iris and the idea**. That is perhaps the turning point, the turning round, of these late Field Nocturnes. "Onwards and upwards", becomes twisted into the two titles "Onwords" [FN30] and "Opwords" [FN31]. But what do I mean by *opwords* in this Field Nocturne's title? Certainly I can say briefly that yes, it is upward and up words, with a twist. The twist is the turn, ontogenetic and phylogenetic, to the What that each us is: ?OP ? Operationally Position. Now **what** could that possible mean? Turning, rounding, is a strategy of human survival.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>The strangely turned footnotes of the central chapter of *The Redress of Poise*, titled "Turners: Strategists of Survival," come to mind here, but also the title that emerged for the *Cantowers* after about 30 essays, *Roun Doll, Home James*: a title obviously dependent on Joyce's

