

Field Nocturne 40

Doctrines of the Studying Organism

1. Texts of a Disoriented Culture

If nothing else, the series points to the massive need for an accepted ethics of collaboration, and I point to that ethics in an essay written while trickling to the end of this series, moving into the transitional essays that are to wind us back into the full project of *The Cantowers*.¹

Here I might well have attempted to give some survey of opaque doctrines prevalent in contemporary text, this inviting a beginning of functional research.² But, in line with my need to close down, I simply home in on one classic text that turns up later.³ The Text is *The Organism* by Kurt Goldstein, recently republished with a foreword by Oliver Sachs.⁴ Sachs comments on the significance of Goldstein: “The global theory that Goldstein and Lashley and the Gestaltists sought may have emerged

¹The full project is very briefly indicated in *Field Nocturnes CanTower 42*, “The Dismal Failure of Lonergan Studies”. The ethical challenge to culture is laid out in *Field Nocturnes CanTower 47*, “‘What-to-do?’ : The Heart of Lonergan’s Ethics”. *Field Nocturnes CanTower 43* : “The Full Cantower Series”, indicates how the various series come together.

²Why the word *opaque*? Because there is missing in all present texts the luminosity of an explicit foundational effort. But now I am harking back to the *Cantower* Series, which moved, in *Cantowers* 39, 40, 41, through problems of Dialectic, Foundations, and Doctrines.

³See *Field Nocturnes CanTower 49*, “Desire Undistanced: Part One”, note 27, and the pointings towards the text of Goldstein to which I now turn. (Part one is the first of two. “Part Two” comes in the penultimate *FNC*, *FNC 116* : “Desire Undistanced: Part Two. Phylogenesis”, which deals with eschatology. Such a reference certainly shows the need for me to close down this narrower series in some convenient fashion!).

⁴Zone Books, New York, 2000. The full title of the book is *The Organism. A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man*. I would note that my own approach to the topic, beyond this series, is expressed in Part One, “Method in Theology and Botany”, of the website book, *Method in Theology: Revisions and Implementations*. I refer to the book below as **Organism**.

in Edelman's theory of neural Darwinism and his concept of the brain as a sort of society."⁵ Renaud Barbaras, whose *Desire and Distance* we slipped past in previous essays here, draws on Goldstein: "We must still establish the constitutive relation between perception and movement beyond the empirical fact that living beings are the ones who perceive. This correlation has been established unquestionably by the important current of psychophysiological thought represented by Goldstein, who focused on the unitary character of the organism in contrast with physicochemical or vitalistic reductions."⁶ All this is grist for a cyclic collaboration over generations, a collaboration necessary to an effective reaching of global cumulative and progressive results.

Is there any point in adding other comments? I occasionally here and elsewhere identify what I am doing as a sort of pattering towards functional research. Research, within an standard model - as most evident in physics - is on the look-out for anomalies, positive or negative. You can think immediately of the comments of Sachs and Barbaras above in that manner. What might I say here, to nudge the community of functional interpreters that have as yet to emerge? The nudging, under present circumstances, has to lack definition: think of a physicist of the early 20th century attempting to talk of traces of a Higgs particle in that old context. So I ramble a bit here for a paragraph.

"Goldstein, Kantian though he was, has rich pointers about the organism as

⁵Oliver Sachs, in his Foreword, **Organism**, 14.

⁶*Desire and Distance*, 88. See the index there under *Goldstein*.

being,⁷ about its wholeness⁸ and direction⁹, in the peculiarities of sense unspecificity¹⁰ and the non-localized actuality of localized activities¹¹, in the dynamics of its anxiety and its oscillations between consciousness and unconsciousness¹², in its unification of body, even living body, and what is called mind.¹³ But the rich pointers make relevant up-to-date sense only to the reader within the standard model which is at present non-standard. The subtle selection of what is suspected as neglected progress is a refined process that the interpreter struggles towards hopefully and honestly, knowing that the historians will sift the efforts to interpret and that the dialectic community may well lift forward details of foundations that are destined to transform future policy and planning, teaching and medicine, technology and research, on round and up in a cycle of cosmopolitan progress.”

There you have pointers, which I put in quotations because in fact I quote from a previous attempt at this penultimate *Field Nocturne*. It is increasingly clear to me that the global-scale shift to functional collaboration has at present slim probabilities. Perhaps your generation will shift those probabilities from Poisson-like structures to Bell-curve bents?

⁷“As we shall see, the normal organism is characterized as a ‘Being’ in a temporal succession of definite form” (**Organism**, 47), “the organism appears to us as a ‘Being’ of relatively constant and qualitative specific nature” (**Organism**, 387). Position etc ch. 8

⁸**Organism**, 66ff.

⁹**Organism**, 84-93.

¹⁰**Organism**, 209 ff.

¹¹**Organism**, 203 ff.

¹²**Organism**, 240 ff.

¹³**Organism**, chapter 11.

2. Flawed Searchings, Fresh Fantasies.

Concluding this unsuccessful series is easier for me by being not a closing but an opening. For one thing it opens to *Field Nocturne 42*, already written in a deliberately compact manner that could be circulated easily, read easily. Why do I claim the series to be unsuccessful? Because, while here and there I ventured towards pedagogy, the general tone was of necessity doctrinal. The more I struggled forward in inviting a consideration of the paragraph **study**, in the context of the chosen text, **Neuroscience**, the more evident it was to me that the task was the impossible one of somehow lifting you, my reader, into a new luminous **WHAT** culture. That **What** culture is to be luminous differently, depending on whether it is the culture of the Tower or the culture of the streets. I am being simplistic here of course: there are to be overlaps, penumbras. The Tower is to require of its inhabitants a self-luminousness that is fully incarnate, and especially tuned to the reality of descriptiveness as in permanent danger of betraying that incarnation. That permanence was symbolized in the book *Loneragan's Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry* by underlaying in the text the 23rd Cantower, "Redoubt Description."¹⁴ I had not yet, at that stage, reach the "comeabout" luminousness of grasping the precise needs of the transition to full explanatory control, needs that were screaming out of a proper fulsome aggreformic perspective. That perspective is, alas, solidly incommunicable at present: it lifts the canon of complete explanation to an adult maturity, meshing physics up through all the infoldings of energy through the canons of hermeneutics to canons of eschatological life, where Complete Explanation is the Word Eternal, fleshed, and the fleshed Word's mind, in the companionship of

¹⁴Part of my difficulty is that, as I noted here and there in the series, I have been lifted forward to a much more refined perspective on the flaws of description by the present effort, but writing it up pedagogically is quite another matter. On the deeper issue here see *Field Nocturnes CanTower 115*, "Ontogenesis". That is the point the text here winds into and round immediately. That essay carries forward into the penultimate essay, number 116, where we arrive at the strange possibility that finite and infinite of the real being an integral organic achievement. Does this not bring us to a fresh fleshed inner word of the mystical body of God?

assembled humanities minds, living in a surprised acceptance of the elusiveness of Complete Explanation.

That last paragraph is compact and complete, but strangely empty here: it is the meaning of the central metaword, **W3**, but now much more grown and groaning than when I first invented it one morning in Montreal more than twenty years ago.¹⁵ That paragraph and that Word, W3, is to be a home of the 22nd century that “is elitist”¹⁶ but acceptable as incarnately defining the mature conversation of the tower people with each other, just as present front-line particle and cosmic physicists are boned and honed into equations of Maxwell or Einstein or Schrödinger or Feynman and their ilk..

The paragraph **study**, as I have noted earlier, is a paragraph for the serious, a program for the pursuit of a full explanatory account of plant, animal or human. The twist of my title is towards the human organism, the organism that studies, that seeks, in an intertwined and intertwining fashion, to intussuscept into the invisibility of an inner word, the intertwined self and cosmos. The heuristic that I point to is massively remote but at least its absence intrigues the students of humanity that are of larger heart.

I think that I can usefully point, as I end, towards the core potential of that intriguing, by turning us towards a pause about, (about)³, round about, molecularity. My own experience of struggling with the incarnation of the comeabout attitude is that chemical symbolisms are, literally vital. This suggestion, of course, pleases superficially the genetic code people. But only superficially, or should I say reductively. Yes, it is all about chemicals but the codes are patterns that are no more in the molecules than an architect’s idea is in the bricks and steel. The heuristic trick is to come to grips with that,

¹⁵The diagram is available in various places e.g. page 124 of *A Brief History of Tongue*. It originally emerged on the occasion of my presentation at the Conference that led to the volume *Lonergan’s Hermeneutics. Its Development and Application*, edited by Sean E. McEvenue and Ben F. Meyer, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1989.

¹⁶*Method in Theology*, 351.

oh so slowly, an aggreformic intramolecular and intervenous climb that is at present shockingly solitary but is to blossom into the interpersonal. It is a climb up, through, over, chemical imaging of our global goings-on, seeing and hearing each other as patterned curious aggregates of chemicals driving cars and golf balls and orchestras and cutlery and gracefilled cups.

But that trickery is not trick but truth appropriated in an explanatory heuristic, and “to appropriate truth is to make it one’s own.”¹⁷

Loneragan follows that statement with nine powerful paragraphs on the topic. The existential issue is the reading of those paragraphs in the recognition that they are about you, **youthere**, and that they are doctrinal. They are like condensed instructions on how to swim, or how to play the cello. They do not, did not, seem to work in our culture. So I added earlier in the Cantowers a parallel to that section of *Insight 17, Cantower 3: “Round One Willing Gathering”*, section three, “Identifications”, that placed the task of appropriation in the effective context of functional collaboration. I am confident that if and when the collaboration moves into operation the statistics of success of appropriation will shift significantly. The **if** points to a convergence on statistical certainties, with large numbers and long intervals of time. The **when**: that depends on **youthere.**, and on how, **HOW**, you react to the plain challenge of *Field Nocturnes CanTower 42*, which asks us to face the dismal failure to date of Lonergan’s invitation to global collaboration.

¹⁷*Insight*, 558[581].