

Field Nocturne 32

Seeing is Deceiving

The saying that I twist in the title is “seeing is believing,” but is it not the same difference? The saying, twisted or not, invites us toward the deep complexities of human evolution, the evolution of seeing, of talk of seeing, of writing about seeing, of the slow seeding of a science of seeing. The invitation as effective, however, is itself complex. You might well go back now to re-cognize the first four of these essays. The effective invitation is dealt with in the first essay, the invitation to collaborate functionally. The fourth essay there touches on the existential difficulty of taking that invitation seriously. But I leave further comment on that to the conclusion of section 2 here. I invited you, as part of the strategy of the invitation - most especially if you are a beginner - to skip swiftly through this essay for the present. It mirrors the massive complexity mentioned in the second sentence above. So, we have a shot at what might be a piece of a smaller grade 12 journey in next essay, Field Nocturne 33: there I invite you to the creative intussusception of detail that should be normative at that stage in education. Wasn't it Collingwood who remarked that games were encouraged so as to use up the energy that was not being tapped in the classroom?

1. The One and the Many

My title here refers to contexts. Both of us are now going to skim: I doctrinally, you problematically. What does this distinction mean? Skim on. The meaning of the distinction is something that is to belong to a later stage of culture. Still, you may be able to skim doctrinally, if your spontaneity has either not been warped or it has been educated in doctrinal reading. My own experience of meeting *Insight* may help as an illustration very much to the point. I had been educated, especially at the graduate level, to read doctrinal writing properly. One reads a text on training for the marathon: but one is not ready for the marathon without the training exercises. So, e.g. I had spent

a great deal of the year 1955-56 laboring with Schrödinger's *Space-Time Structure*. It began as an obscure and exciting invitation - I am surely not alone in the tendency to skim through a new text, getting more and more lost by the chapter, but then ready to face the climb? The climb continued for me over the years, and I renewed it in the beginning of this century: but that is a story for the next footnote. At all events, I was thus providentially prepared for the doctrinal reading of chapter 5 of *Insight*. It was obscure and exciting and way beyond me, as in many ways it still is.

Through that lucky preparation I suppose I came closer to "The One" mentioned in the title here. But please forgive me: The One is really two: there is The One that is the spontaneous one who is lucky; there is "The One" that is the Tower of Able, that invites globally towards appreciating thematically in the Tower and appreciating operatively in the street, doctrinal pointing.¹

What, then, do I mean by "The Many"? I am talking about the complexities mentioned in the second sentence of this essay. I am talking about the many orientations and disorientations of 7 billion years of humans on the road to "The Genesis of Adequate Self-Knowledge,"² of "the conditioning of metaphysics by human development"³ or the lack of it, of the lack of "the cultural milieu"⁴ and "most of all knowledge of all that is lacking."⁵

This section adds a few hints about that last problem: the lack of a sense of incomplete development. Only a few more hints, but the few may click with some few more, with you, especially if you have climbed seriously through these muddled

¹The basic issue here is raised in chapter 3, "*Haute Vulgarization*", of *Lack in the Beingstalk*.

²I am quoting the title of that key section of *Insight*, section 1.2 of chapter 17.

³*Insight*, 535[559].

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Insight* 536[559].

comments on that single paragraph **study**.⁶ I have personally been struggling with this problem for a life-time, and only in my seventies has I become a little luminous in the matter, the matter of both ontogenetic and phylogenetic growth.⁷ The question is still there for me, posed to me by me as the title of the unwritten Cantower 56, “Tadpole Tell us Talling Tales.”

What further hints should I give? What is needed, and lacking, is a “cultural milieu”. The cultural milieu of ontogenetic growth, that is to be a reality of early compact consciousness, when elders were sensed to have soaked in something of the rhythms of years of hunting and cooking and child-bearing. But the cultural milieu of phylogenetic growth: that is a larger problem of a self-fulfilling prolepsis, a cosmic nudging of good will to intussuscept history’s tadpolehood so that good will wills luminously, “good will wills the order of the universe, and so wills with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.”⁸ But of course that heuristic luminosity pivots on evolutionary sports convincing teenagers and twenty+-year olds, against the tide, that their adult minding is, normatively, an accelerating reality. And convincing them operatively, effectively: that is quite another agonizing matter: very few parents, or indeed teachers, pressure young people to “settle up”. Might I persuade you effectively to settle up? I cannot promise you a rise garden: you are surrounded by “I see dead people” was a phrase I enjoyed talking about in the beginning of this century.

My hint here comes from a return to the topic of Merleau-Ponty and his warped genuineness. I have to hand a book that provides a context: Renaud Barbaras, *The Being*

⁶You will find a deeper twist, even a depressing twist, when we get to *Field Nocturne 36*: “Desire and Distance” and *Field Nocturne 37*, “Desire Undistanced”.

⁷These are to be the topic of *Field Nocturnes CanTower 115* and *116*.

⁸*Insight*, 700[722].

of the Phenomenon. Merleau-Ponty's *Ontology*.⁹ I do not ask you to rush immediately to read it: take it's naming as a bit of doctrinal skimming. Further, I wish you to take similarly a second book that does for 20th century physics what Renaud does for 20th century phenomenology: Lochlainn O'RaiFeartaigh, *The Dawning of Gauge Theory*.¹⁰ I would have you skimmingly notice a particular contrast. Both books are pre-scientific dialectic, but Lochlainn is a better dialectician than Renaud. Why is this?

I postpone musing over question until we have venture some distance on an elementary track specified elementarily by the question, What is seeing? But as a lead into that tracking I would have us pause over a key passage - how amazingly key remains to be seen, seized through the effort named by that later effort.¹¹ Here, then is that passage that leads us both into our elementary puzzling about our ocular vision and a glimpse of my fullest possible foundational visioning to date. I am quoting from RBMP, chapter 12, which is titled Originary Spatio-Temporal. It is the third of four chapters of the book dealing with "The Visible", which is the title of Part Three of the book. The previous two chapters there are 10: "The Flesh: the Visible and the Invisible" and 11: "Dimensionality: The Thing and the World". My naming here of those chapters and that Part is doctrinal writing at its most compact. Does it suggest anything about

⁹Translated by Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, Indiana University Press, 2004. To be referred to below as **RBMP**. The original French version (please excuse missing accents) is *De l'etre du phenomene: l'ontologie de Merleau-Ponty*, edition jerome Nilton, Grenoble, 1991.

¹⁰Princeton University Press, 1997. I refer to this book later as **LORDawn**. Interestingly, the parallel is fuller, and we shall return to this in Filed Nocturne 36.. Both authors have what may be considered (a topic for that later discussion) parallel foundational or systematic reflections in their respective areas. Renaud Barbaras has *Desire and Distance: Introduction to the Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Paul B.Milan, Standford University Press, 2006. The French original is *Le desir et la distance* (Paris, Vrin, 1999). I shall refer to this work herafter as **RBDesire**. LoclainnO'RaiFeartaigh's equivalent is *Group Structure of Gauge Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹¹I leave the text unchanged here, although - as we see in the final version of Field Nocturne 37 - the effort proved to be impossibly unwieldly and I glided past it!

our paralleling? Does the title of chapter 10 link in your **whathere** with previous puzzling about the flesh? Such naming and question-marking are turnings of **whathere** to possible ecstasy earned by little staggers of climbing. A culture of such earning is missing, but we get to that in an elementary way at the end of the following section. So I conclude with what is to prove, I suggest, a strategic quotation for our entire enterprise. We return to it twice more, in Field Nocturne 36 and Field Nocturne 37.¹²

“Merleau-Ponty’s reflections on space, which several paragraph’s of ‘Eye and Mind’ provide, is implied by his interrogation of vision. Vision alone gives me access to what is not me, to what is ‘fully and simply’. To see is not to coincide blindly with the object, but to unfold an interiority. Insofar as they are seen, the things do not rest in themselves at an absolute distance, but they nonetheless remain far away, thick. They recede into a distance which, measured from me, is nevertheless proximity. Spatiality is then synonymous with the ‘being-there’ [*l’etre-la*] of the thing, with its appearance as thing. The attempt to conceive spatiality is an attempt to draw a little nearer to the heart of the experience, a little nearer to the carnal chiasm.”¹³

2. Unfolding the Infolding that is Sight.

We move on to some elementary puttering with the basic text, **Neuroscience**, or some equivalent of it that you happen to have. In **Neuroscience** we have two chapters, chapter 9, “The Eye” (pp. 281 - 312) and chapter 10, “The Central Visual System”

¹²I mentioned already, in the previous note, a cut-off in the reflections. The quotation was to become a take-off point for a very substantial reflection: indeed it began to look like the addition of another 300 pages to the 300 that I had initially undertaken. The repetition of that text will, perhaps, inspire someone younger than I am to undertake the task of interpreting that single paragraph in ever widening contexts. Eventually the passage is to be interpreted functionally within what I call the *Standard Model* that is operative for that generation. And the interpretation will be cycled round, uplifting history and foundations, and finally, through changes in doctrines, systems, and communications theory, yield new twists of pedagogy and of street-talk.

¹³**RBMP**, 204. It is the first paragraph of the subsection of the chapter “Originary Spatio-Temporality”, with title “Philosophy and Space”.

(pp.313 - 348), so 68 pages in all. A couple of hours reading? Or is it not rather a couple of months thinking, or even a millennium's inheritance to incest, a billion years of glimpsing glimpsing to anticipate? But that is the heavy question meriting a further initial doctrinal musing at the end of this section.

We move towards those musings by pausing over the enterprise of studying seeing that is faced either in highschool or in an undergraduate programme. We pause, with some odd seriousness, over the listed contents of the two chapter (chapter 9: page 280; chapter 10: page 313) and, as well, over the first three pages of chapter 9, which are 1 page (281) of Introduction and 2 pages (282-3) on "Properties of Light". As I said, you may have the equivalent of these pages, but a photocopy of the actual pages would help you **whathere**: make do as best you can.