

## Was it an echo?

Back in the Depression days my father felt economically sound enough to try out a record player. The store allowed him to bring it home and furnished a popular recording - on one side Are You Having Any Fun and on the other When The Deep Purple Falls. My sister and I played them over and over again. Along with the loan of the record, the store gave us a small plastic disk and a recording device whereby we could make a record of our own voices. Frances and I went to work on that at once. I'm not sure what she recorded, but I sang into the recording instrument a simple song:

*Little Sir Echo, how do you do? / Hello! (hello!) Hello! (hello!) / Little Sir Echo I'm awfully blue / Hello! (hello!) Hello! (hello!) // Hello! (hello!) Hello! (hello!) Won't you come over and play? / You're a nice little fellow / I know by your voice / But you're always so far away.*

Of course to address an echo like that may seem a bit naïve. After all, we know an echo is simply the return of our own voice, rebounding off the confines of our environment – as in the story of Tom Sawyer and Becky when they were lost in that cave and called out for help. And it says: . . . *their call went echoing down the empty aisles and died out in the distance in a faint sound that resembled a ripple of mocking laughter.*

Yet saints and philosophers and poets are convinced we are not trapped in some echo chamber – that we do hear someone or something calling us from time to time – and if we were indeed attuned to our environment we might be deafened by the chorus of all the beings, the trees, sky, sun, mustard flowers, daffodils, even houses and robins and distant galaxies that *resound* around us like Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*. Indeed, as the only creatures we know that have the power of intelligible speech, it is we who translate what other creatures have to say, first of all by giving them names (as Adam does in the Book of Genesis). Thus those yellow things in my yard I call daffodils! And they acquire a “personality” – I release their power to “relate” to me and I to them.

But you don't have to go beyond our biblical drama to learn that “calls” can be much more than a rebound of one's own voice. There is the example of the boy David asleep in the Temple when he hears a voice and runs to the priest Eli, saying Here I am. This call comes three times and Eli says, *I did not call you*. Advised to respond next time with *Speak, Lord, for I'm listening*, Samuel emerges to become a figure of vast significance in Israel's history. And then there are all those moments in the Gospels when Jesus summons people to follow him – like Simon Peter, the accountant Levi, so many others . . . without a clear idea of whither but more a “Come and see” enticement.

When I look back at my past life there were memorable turning points where I seemed to have changed, become different than I was the day before – triggered by something (a voice?) that popped up in my mind with a tilt in another direction and with a momentum to match. My creed tells me it was God – or was it indeed only myself (or let's say that version of Christ I am and you are called to be?)

*You're a nice little fellow / I know by your voice / But you're always so far away.*

**Geoff Wood**