

Humus 1 Preludes

The last paragraph of the series *Prehumous*¹ made mention of a series that could follow, following especially within a mood to be created by the 2008 Halifax Conference to which those late *Prehumous* essays were a pre-humoring. I will express the hope there that the series would somehow move towards collaboration, indeed towards a surging feminist collaboration. There may well be generated then something of a mood, an ethos, that could lift us towards collaboration, with functional collaboration as an objective. But it is too soon still to expect written ventures into specialties. Realistically, both in the conference and in my writings, I talk of a beginning in the year 2011 and a relative maturity in the year 2111.

I myself, in my 77th year, would like to withdraw from the communal struggle into my own increasingly obscure climb, with reverierun toward merging dynamically with cosmic zeal.² But there seems some outreaching to be done to help us bridge the existential gap and the gap of these few years. The fundamental bridge to be crossed, a cross, is still that identified by Lonergan in the first paragraph of chapter 5 of *Insight*: that is a century's work, climbing into the explanatory world of the Word. But the road has other crosses, other axial repentances that would align us with cosmic zeal. Especially on my mind now is the crippled axial molecular *vis cogitativa* that is to engage me, and hopefully some **us**, molecularly, in the next short *Humus*.

Engage molecularly? My meaning, perhaps, may come across from paralleling these essays with the Preludes of Chopin. I have before me a precious little book of the Opus 28 Preludes that includes comments of great names molecularly engaged with these short works: the likes of Schumann, Liszt, Georg Sand.³

"I admit that I do not understand the title that Chopin liked to give to these short *pieces*: Preludes. Preludes to what?.... Each one of them is a prelude to a meditation; nothing can be less a concert piece; nowhere has Chopin revealed himself more intimately."⁴ Should I not, perhaps,

¹The last paragraph of *Prehumous 12*. See also note 26 of *Prehumous 11*.

²*Insight*, 702[722].

³Chopin, *Preludes*, Op. 28, edited by Thomas Higgins, Norton, New York, 1973.

⁴*Preludes*, 96: it is a remark of Andre Gide.

have called this final series, *Preludes*? I recall now, when I was approaching sixty, quoting Indo-Anglian poets like A.K.Ramanujan, “Sixty losing a life-time of double vision,”⁵ but there is a sense in which I was resonating, then, more with the mood of Clara Schumann, who grew in inner music prior to outer *bavardage*, and now certainly I resonate better, at 76, with the innerness of Nadia Boulanger’s final words, “*une musique ni commencement ni fin.*”⁶ What do I transmit here, and how is it rubbed, how does it rub off on, rub into, ribotidings?

“We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-tips.
‘So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room.’ ”⁷

Are we not back with the message of Marcel Proust, and with the post-axial challenge of adult growth? Is not life a humus climbing clutching at one’s neurochemical heart?

“When [the pianist] had begun a Prelude by Chopin, Mme. De Cambremer turned to Mme de Franquetot with a tender smile, full of intimate reminiscence, as well as of satisfaction (that of a competent judge) with the performance. She had been taught in her girlhood to fondle and cherish those long-necked, sinuous creatures, the phrases of Chopin, so free, so flexible, so tactile, which begin by seeking their ultimate resting place somewhere beyond and far wide of the direction in which they started, the point which one might have expected them to reach, phrases which divert themselves in those fantastic bypaths only to return more deliberately - with a more premeditated reaction, with more precision, as on a crystal bowl which, if you strike it, will ring and throb until you cry aloud in anguish - to clutch at one’s heart.”⁸

⁵See *Process* (website www.philipmcshane.ca), the Interlude prior to chapter 6.

⁶*Ibid.*, conclusion of *Afterwards*.

⁷*Preludes*, 98.

⁸Quoted from Proust in *Preludes*, 95, with a reference to *Remembrance of Things Past* (2 vols), translated by C.K.Scott Moncrieff, New York, 1954, *Swann’s Way*, vol 1, p. 254.