

Posthumous 16

Spiraling Assertions as Psychic Skin

For the divine persons are sent in accordance with their eternal processions, to encounter us and dwell in us in accordance with similar processions in us through grace. Those who proceed from and are sent by the Father do not come without the Father, to whom be all glory through the Son in the Spirit. . . . in the fullness of time he [the Father] sent his incarnate Son in truth so that in believing the Word we might speak true inner words and understand.¹

I begin here by quoting the same text on which we reflected in an elementary fashion at the conclusion of *Posthumous* 14. That elementary level was maintained to some degree through the previous essay. The text referred to was, after all, an undergraduate text and I took advantage of that orientation to muse about the future of ordinary students, the masses to which and of which Ortega spoke.² Now I turn to Ortega's plea for a faculty of culture;³ I turn to those who might find themselves called to walk with Jesus in global care.

¹ B. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, University of Toronto Press, 2007, CWL 12, 513-521, quoting from the beginning and end of the selected pages.

² See José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, translated by Anthony Kerrigan, edited by Kenneth Moore, with a Foreword by Saul Bellow, University of Notre Dame Press, 1985. Ortega's notion of the masses was quite complex. Chapters 6 and 8 of the book are directly on the topic, but also chapter 12 on "The Barbarism of Specialization." Saul Bellow, in his Foreword to the translation, neatly sums up Ortega and also the problem of the changes in the meaning of *mass man* since Ortega's time. "Ortega when he speaks of the mass man does not refer to the proletariat: he does not mean us to think of any social class whatever. To him the mass man is an altogether new human type. Lawyers in the courtroom, judges on the bench, surgeons bending over anaesthetized patients, international bankers, men of science, millionaires.... differ in no important respect from TV repair men, clerks in Army-Navy stores, municipal fire-inspectors, or bartenders. It is Ortega's view that we in the West live under a dictatorship of the commonplace." (ix) Much of Lonergan scholarship is done by mass men – women, please, to the rescue! – inviting Lonergan into such a commonplace. I would have another type of revolt occur, of masses of younger people, nudged by these essays and by the Spring Campaign 2013.

³ José Ortega y Gasset, *Mission of the University*, translated with an Introduction by Howards Lee Nostrand, Princeton University Press, 1944. See the concluding chapter.

Here I am less at a loss than I was when I tackled *Posthumous* 17, “Jesus: Flower in the Crannied Caul,” the text of which I finished a week ago. There I saved myself from yet another lengthy pointing by pointing to a prior effort. Certainly I have altogether more, much more, to say about the climb to metacontrol⁴ than I had a decade ago. But, however lengthy, would they not be assertions, answers blowing in the wind? And is there not already this big book of Lonergan with its 18 assertions,⁵ a feast waiting for ingestion, intussusception, molecularization? A later millennium will write it, right it, in How-language, making the door in less obscure. I might well have tried something like that here: say, rewriting the 18 assertions in a way that would bring you closer to your psychic skin, but I leave that to other generations clothed in psychic skin resonant with pointing patterns of meshed molecules. But we may ask, perhaps even ask each other in a seed of the 1833 overture, what does “closer to your psychic skin” mean to you herenow, now here, in the now-here no-where of our inner word flowing in your neuromolecules?

We are back, of course, in the There Then no-w-here galaxy of *Cantower* 9, “Position, Poisition, Protopossession.” We are back further into a door into your galactic self that I pointed to a decade ago in *Cantower* 5, “Metaphysics THEN,”

⁴ This would have been an opportunity to point to various treatments of the topic, but now I prefer to draw attention to an exercise. It is given in my article of *Journal of Macrodynamic Analysis* Vol. 1 (2001): “Undermining Macrodynamic Reading” (available at: <http://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/jmda/article/view/101/55>). The exercise is around an apparently simple mathematical puzzle about the number of ways of seating a group of couples at a round table. One has a better idea of – a real assent to – the meaning of control of meaning when one not only solves the problem, but can stand up, noteless, and present the solution in an intelligently controlled manner. Of course, one needs image-making facilities!

⁵ CWL 12, 145, 181, 189, 235, 239, 247, 257, 325, 351, 363, 369, 377, 413, 421, 439, 443, 455, and 513. One would do well to extract the list of Assertions from the table of content so that its contemplation would become a part of our common effort, our mass revolt. You will find, I hope, that my twists and turns on the meaning and context of our assertions, and our assertions of such assertions as these, and the 26 assertions of *Insight* 19.9, and the 31 assertions of *Insight* 20, edge you into a protopossession way beyond what I struggled with a decade ago, in *Cantower* 9, “Position, Poisition, Protopossession” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower9.pdf>). My comments reach a disturbing pinnacle when you come to pause, in *Posthumous* 19, over, in, about, the assertion named *judgment of value*.

when I tried to twist your psyche round Samuel Becket's last two little poems. Perhaps you might read them no-w-here, side by side, round about, vortex-vortex-wise, flexing your neurochemicals in luminous wonderment, one door meant?

go where never before	go end there
no sooner there than there always	where never till then
no matter where never before	till as much as to say
no sooner there than there always	no matter where
	no matter when

The full issue is going where never before towards being at home in your molecularized inner word, and going to the end there, your eternal home, as one of a tower community of Global care. Its fullness is a sublation of science and common sense into a growing luminosity of yourself as subject among subjects as subjects including Eternal Subjects.⁶ The growing and searching is handily symbolized by the second paragraph of the second canon of hermeneutics. Here I place that paragraph as a companion challenge to the earlier *Insight* challenge to self-luminosity. They – you – are orientations in tower-commitment that are to be operative in mutual mediation in each and every Towering good will that “wills the order of the universe and so wills it with that order’s dynamic joy and zeal.”⁷ Are we poised now to “come about,” even a little, ever so slowly?

So it comes about that the extroverted subject visualizing extensions and experiencing duration gives place to the subject orientation to the objective of the pure desire to know and affirming beings differentiated by certain

⁶ The astute reader will notice that I am saying here in a more discomfoting fashion what Lonergan asserts on *Method in Theology*: “To speak of the dynamic state of being in love with God pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of interiority has been made the explicit ground of the worlds of theory and of common sense” (107).

⁷ *Insight*, 722, conclusion.

conjugate potencies, forms and acts grounding certain laws and frequencies.⁸

Armed with the suspicion of that strange dark inner skin-assertiveness, we may Tower forward towards the giant detailed Jesus-meaning of

[t]he explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being in its three elements. First, there is the genetic sequence in which insights gradually are accumulated by man. Secondly, there are the dialectic alternatives in which the accumulated insights are formulated, with positions inviting further development and counterpositions shifting their ground to avoid the reversal they demand. Thirdly, with the advance of culture and of effective education, there arises the possibility of the differentiation and specialization of modes of expression, and since this development conditions not only the exact communication of insights but also the discoverers grasp of his discovery, since such a grasp and its exact communication intimately are connected with the advance of positions and the reversal of counterpositions, the three elements in the explanatory differentiation of the protean notion of being fuse into a single explanation.⁹

I appeal to you to brood over these two texts in perhaps frightened astonishment at their shift of the “Enterprise”¹⁰ of theology, “going where no one has gone before.”¹¹ Be led to scrabble freshly and contemplatively for position and poosition, lifting as best you can those simple positional assertions of *Insight* 413

⁸ *Ibid.*, 537.

⁹ *Insight*, 609-610.

¹⁰ I am in fact appealing here to a metaphor used previously when I titled the final essay of the book *Redress of Poise*, “Grace: The Final Frontier.” You, each serious reader, must search for creatively-structured myths and metaphors (see *Insight*, 568-9) that “have the knack of making men feel as small as they really are, which meant as great as God has made them.” I quote here a piece from Patrick Kavanagh’s “If ever you go to Dublin Town,” which gives a sobering time-shift of 100 years. Or, in the Enterprise context, I think of the final episode (Season 7, episode 25: May 23 1994) in which Jean Luc Picard is time-shifted frighteningly back and forth in a weave towards the salvation of humanity. Of course, he was within a team in a towering craft, which leads me to a satirical grin about present efforts to save humanity on the broomstick of 20th century theology.

¹¹ Relate this to the problem of Christian philosophy. See note 12 of *Posthumous* 18 and note 6 of *Posthumous* 19.

into a strange inner self far from the Red Bus or the white, red or brown nose, fringe-seen of your reading. Our Tower task of love is to move slowly and sufferingly “so that in believing the Word we might speak true inner words and understand.”¹² Our inner words of the Word are to mediate a growing psychic skin of understanding, the colors of blood and bus and nose and money wafted phantasmically and fantastically into Divine Promise.¹³

I have no more to say here about Lonergan’s 18 assertions in his systematics of the Trinity. The task of re-writing them and road-righting them, of placing them in a Tower pedagogy of inner contemplation that blossoms into street walk and talk, that is a task to be initiated in this millennium.

I was, however, foolishly tempted to invite a pause here over Lonergan’s “Assertion 11: The notional acts are natural, conscious, intellectual, rational, necessary, autonomous, eternal, the foundations of order in God.”¹⁴ More than three years of focused searching brought me to an assertion of the twined finite foundations of order expressed in the five words, “Clasping, Cherishing, Calling, Craving, Christing.” They weave round five other words in and of and about Trinitarian joy, “Thought on Method is Apt.” Would five hundred words help, or five hundred thousand? Then withdraw, young man or woman, to return from the stars later with your divine assertions perhaps expressed with new how-words.¹⁵

¹² B. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, 519- 521.

¹³ CWL 12, 521.

¹⁴ CWL 12, 369.

¹⁵ Might we not thus, with your help, head towards a star-trek salvation of humanity (see note 10 above)? The invitation in the text echoes an old invitation of mine, from *The Prologue of Process: Introducing Themselves to Young Christian Minds*, a book written in Oxford during the winter of 1988-89. I failed to get it published, of course, but it is available on the website (at: <http://www.philipmcschane.ca/process.pdf>), still highly recommend to young people as it was then, presented in the mood of Rilke, Nadia Boulanger, Jane Fonda and, here, William Cobbett (1763- 1835), that marvelous non-nonsense empiricist – Chesterton’s *William Cobbett* is worth a read - who wrote *Advice to Young men and (incidentally) to Young Women in the Middle and Higher Ranks of Life*.