

Posthumous 17

Jesus: Flower in the Crannied Caul¹

“As the moon is the four-dimensional manifold of positions and phases, so human subjectivity is the intelligible unity in the multi-dimensional manifold of the conscious events of a lifetime.”²

The title of this essay certainly suggests a great foundational book. Might I have tackled it were I not, like the scholarly Kublai Khan, bent on taking the field?³ But my war venture is more easily compared to that of the scholarly poet, Patrick Pearse, declaring, in 1916, an end to what started in Ireland in 1169. It takes mad courage to make a proclamation against a cultural empire, centuries-settled into a comfortable and arrogantly legislative descriptiveness, “big frogs in little ponds,” as Lonergan said to me in Easter 1961. The Flower is my topic, and flowers have been my topic since the mid-sixties.⁴ The Flower was my topic in that final book

¹ I echo here the short poem of Tennyson to which Lonergan implicitly referred in his 1942 work. See *For a New Political Economy*, CWL 21, 31. The poem is quoted by me in full in note 1 there.

² B. Lonergan, “Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,” *A Third Collection*, Paulist Press, 1985, p. 98, note 40. Add to this Christological context of 1975 my own context of the same year: “Authentic Subjectivity and International Growth: Foundations.” It is the Epilogue of *The Shaping of the Foundations*, published in 1976 (available at <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/foundations.pdf>), that contains, as its first two chapters, the two papers I presented at the Florida Conference of 1970: “Image and Emergence. Towards an Adequate *Weltanschauung*,” on botany, and “Metamusic and Self-Meaning,” on the need for functional collaboration in musicology.

³ I noted my intention, in note 16 of *Posthumous* 14, of moving into a Spring Campaign. Light background reading during my winter searchings happened to be Conn Iggulden, *Conqueror*, (Harper Paperback, 2012), a story based on the Mongol period 1244-1260. But of course it also fermented parallels: it would be nice to replace the shabby Karakorum of Lonerganism – I am thinking of the unflattering view of William of Rubruck: he visited the place in 1254 – with some Xanadu. But whereto my Spring Campaign now? See, further, note 17 of *Posthumous* 21.

⁴ My first serious heuristic venture into botany was “Insight and the Strategy of Biology,” *Spirit as Inquiry. Studies in Honor of Bernard Lonergan S.J.*, edited by Frederick Crowe, Herder and

of mine, *Method in Theology 101 AD 9011: The Road to Religious Reality*.⁵ But The Flower, the *Flos de Radice Jesse*, had another name there, *The Symphony of Christ*.⁶ Of that book I would audaciously claim, as Lonergan proclaimed to me in 1970, in high-pitched voice, of my 1969 paper on botany, “well, it just opens up area after area.” Well, that paper did not open up any area in Lonergan studies, no more than its companion paper on functional collaboration in musicology.⁷ It would seem then, as I noted in various other *Posthumous* essays, no ink-length helps to shake the empire: I must march down O’Connell street like Patrick Pearse, or push out East from Karakorum like Kublai Khan - without supportive hordes – or, more realistically – simply nudge a few composers of the next generation, as did Nadia Boulanger.⁸

While my *Cantower* series began with Pearse and Boulanger, the real beginning was a previous essay of 2001 that became *Cantower 2*, “Sunflowers, Speak to Us

Herder, 1964. Botany played a large role in my doctorate work at Oxford in the mid-1960s. See *Posthumous 2*, which is a new Preface to the published work, *Randomness, Statistics and Emergence*.

⁵ Axial Publishing, 2011. I usually refer to the book as *The Road to Religious Reality*.

⁶ I introduced “the Seamless Symphonic Christ” in *The Road to Religious Reality*, p. 19, as a suggestive variant on *mystical body*, and went on to connect the solution to Lonergan’s problem of a treatise on the mystical body (*Insight*, 763-4) with the methodological dynamics lurking in the word *Comparison* on page 250 in *Method*. The treatise is to be an on-going genetic sequencing of treatises. One can helpfully think of the genetic sequence of systems that a flower is, but one must struggle to lift this heuristic description towards a grip on the genetic sequence of such semi-full heuristics of the flower as emerged globally. Recall note 4 of *Posthumous 15* to find yourself, perhaps, on the edge of an imagining of a geohistorical system. Adding in the full transposition of the second paragraph of the second canon of hermeneutics would put your effort over the top.

⁷ See note 2 above.

⁸ Nadia Boulanger was a central figure in my *Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders* (1990) and her role as mediator of artistry is illustrated, from Quincy Jones’ Biography, in *Cantower 1*. The six words of the title of *Process* point, respectively, to the six chapters, and the bracketed ‘Christian’ indicates the broader cultural reach – as in *Insight* – of the reflections: the fifth chapter deals with the Flower that is Jesus. And I would note an added twist: Chapter one has, among other reaches, a focus on the Bloom that is Molly, and the two chapters are paralleled in structure and content. So, the final speech of Molly Bloom in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, summarily expressed in chapter one, is paralleled in chapter five with Jesus speaking His way through John’s Gospel. (*Process: Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders* is available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/process.pdf>).

of Growing.” It began with a poem that would not be out of place in the missing book on Flower-blooming or Crannied Spoke, a poem repeated below, indeed I repeat here the full – much fuller now for me! – first page of that *Cantower*.

“May 1st 2002

Sun, flowers, Son-flowered.

Speak to us of growth

Seed cauled, cribbed,

Kabod yet confined,

Crossed with dark earth,

Light-refined,

Rill open-ends a trill

Annotaste of Throat.

1. The Central Foundational Question

I just now typed the final sentence of this essay, leading back to the poem, and find my self a stranger to the person who started with this poem.

I am, in general, a stranger to myself of last week: does this have some meaning for you? Were I to meet myself of last week, perhaps it would take a pedagogical day to bring that stranger up to speed on what is called the level of mind, but even at its best there would be molecular deficiencies in my cloneself. So, I might introduce a little lightness of humour by claiming that this essay is about a challenge: ‘to thy cloneself be true’. What could I possibly mean by *that*? I mean that if you are integrally and harmoniously growing in meaning, then there is a pace of harmonious intussusception, mutual mediation of self and cosmos. Might I throw in the word *sunflowerwise*? Of course, if you are thus harmoniously

growing, then you have reached a strange level of enlightenment, subsuming Zen and Ken into a **Then** enlightenment.”⁹

And before I go further in my inklinks, I leap to repeat the beginning of the short final section, 28 pages later, of that *Cantower*:

“4. Molecular Organisms of Ecstasy

We move round an imaging that somehow entwines a sensing of the Vortex that is the Eternal Idea Now establishing a nowthen bigbang spiralwise towards a Great bearcrunch¹⁰ of echoing spirates. Densification of matter in fresh patterned geometries could mesh the multibillion yearnings in anastomatic meshednerved circumincession. Somehow, in everthening superise.¹¹ The mystery of molecular finitude is that the Eternal Silent Voicing that we name God Gives itself a living wonder-us everlasting Throat.”

⁹ Cantower 2, “Sunflowers, Speak to Us of Growing,” (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower2.pdf>).

¹⁰ *Craunch* is an earlier form of *crunch* meaning **echoic**. I would note that I am not, in the above, taking a position on end-cosmology speculation. Rather I am hinting at the need for an imaging that would reach beyond the usual hierarchic structure. One of the big difficulties of any imaging here is the bent towards embedding which even the best of physicists do not escape: the tendency to place finitude inside a ‘larger’ container. ‘End-times’ will be a topic of later *Cantowers*, particularly *Cantower CXI*. [This note and the note that follows are from the original text. The *Cantower* project was later modified – see *Field Nocturnes Cantower 43* (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/FNC-43.pdf>) – so that the end-times musing was reduced to the comments in *Field Nocturnes Cantower 117*, the final *Cantower* (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/FNC-117.pdf>). I have continued the written musings since, *passim*.]

¹¹ To give meaning to this is the task mentioned in the previous note. One needs to come to grips, on the level of the upper ground of loneliness, with the incomprehensible surprisingness of Eternal Joy Light for any finite mind, even the mind of Jesus, and on the lower ground of loneliness there is the continuum problem meshed everlastingly into our molecularity. Add the context of a needed precision regarding obediential potency: see note 31 above. [Note 31, of course, is the note 31 of the original *Cantower* text. I recall here also, in this added comment, that the final chapter of my little book *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations: Self-Axis of the Great Ascent* (published 1973, available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/wealth.pdf>) ends with the words *infinite surprise*.

And what further inklings might I add? Should I throw in my struggles with Flowers and Blooms of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, chapter 3? Should I go back now to my five Cs of *Posthumous* 12, and add fresh meanings of Caul and Cranny, to make it seven Cs to be sailed? Or should I try to seize your lifelong longing contemplative attention by prosaically transferring my previous talk¹² of the study by experts on dogs and dogmas to the care of flowers through collaborative experts reaching the soil and sky within their common genetic perspective of the best of history's caring for the flowers and The Flower? But that is the silly suggestion of yet another book. I had best just halt and take to the western streets and eastern plains and soundless musichalls, musicals, museycalls, with my proclamation and my hidden hopes.

My integral hope is for a graced unsound in this next millennium, way beyond Mao's "Let a hundred flowers bloom!,"¹³ so that we arrive in Cosmopolis in 9011 A.D., the globe radiant with Self-Portraits¹⁴ of the flowers in The Flower, painting other flowers within flowers everlasting.

¹² Especially in *The Road to Religious Reality*.

¹³ This was a topic in P. McShane, "Middle Kingdom, Middle Man," *Searching for Cultural Foundations*, University Press of America, 1984. Obviously, it is not an inappropriate slogan for a revolution in present theology. In this context of the mention of Cosmopolis and of Middle Kingdom, and as I face the final climb of these essays, it is significant to mention Michael Shute's present work, which weaves round the same problematic as my own struggle: "Functional Collaboration as the Implementation of Lonergan's Method Part 1: For What Problem is Functional Collaboration the Solution?" *Divyadaan: Indian Journal of Philosophy and Education*, volume 24, no. 1 (2013). This is to be followed by a second essay in the same journal.

¹⁴ Self-portraiture is a central theme in *The Road to Religious Reality*.