

Futurology 2

Out-of-Body Experiences

In this and in many of the following essays I continue my C₉ ramble in aid of the futurology of Eschatology. Some, perhaps, would prefer me to go directly into a sort of foundational ramble regarding what I have figured out in that area during the past twenty years.¹ We shall get to that later, but what is important at present is to get futurology on the move as a beginning of global science. The little book *Futurology Express* held a secular line for most of the way through it. Here we move towards thinking of those who reach for a larger futurology, for mystery and sacredness, for some sense of Afterwards.

“We move towards thinking”? Futurology is to be a cyclic science with “cumulative and progressive results.”² The move to thinking thus, effectively, is to be within an increasingly sophisticated and complex worldview, what I have called a *Standard Model*.³ But at present that Standard Model is not shared, so that moving a topic, an anomaly – positive or negative – into the system of cyclic thinking is to be, at present, a stumbling affair. The stumbling reveals to us the need for developing this or that aspect of the Standard Model if we are to cope creatively with any anomaly, any recent creative suggestion or failure.⁴

In the present case the anomalies that nudge us are what are described as *out-of-body experiences* in the book *Tunnel to Eternity*,⁵ to which I already drew attention in the first essay and on which I rely here as pointing to these anomalies. The book is not of central significance: it is simply convenient and you may well have another

¹ Here I note that we are up against a huge cultural warp that relates to what Lonergan wrote, in the Epilogue of *Verbum* (see, in particular, *CWL* 2, 223) about reading. We will need a later culture of adult growth to lift us out of the silly aspects of *haute vulgarization*. The first seven essays in this series are a contribution to that change, especially in regard to ultimates.

² *Method in Theology*, 4 and 5.

³ I first began using the words “Standard Model,” borrowed from contemporary physics, in *Lonergan’s Standard Model of Effective Global Inquiry*, available at:

<http://www.philipmcshane.ca/lonergansmodel.html>

⁴ I would note that I have invited such stumbling before, in the ten *FuSe* Essays 0 – 9, on functional research (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse.html>). Some readers may find the energy to add that climb to their effort here. That climb reveals how the Standard Model current in present Lonerganism deviates considerably from the Standard Model thematized by Lonergan. This essay points to a small step in that larger climb.

⁵ Leon Rhodes, *Tunnel to Eternity. Beyond Near-Death*, with a Foreword by Kenneth King, Chrysalis Press, 1997. Hereafter **Tunnel to Eternity**. The book refers to out-of-body experiences as OBE and the related near-death-experiences as NDE.

account of the anomaly to hand.⁶ But certainly you should pause over some account or accounts of this cultural reality. Google such topics as “out-of-body experiences,” “near death experiences,” “astral journeys,” “Ketamine” and other chemical nudgings, “phantom limbs,” “multiple personalities,” “conjoined embodiments,” whatever. You may well be in this ball park already, e.g., with your five-hour sleep plan after an hour in the sun, a tranquil break of 45 minutes, and then into a sleep that is now the doorway to?⁷ But if you are not in this zone, as practitioner or theoretician, but rather in what I may call classical theology or philosophy, then here you are, reading **this**, where **this** is my brief sublating echo – inner word to inner word⁸ – of Fr. Boyer’s invitation to Lonergan to take note of some cultural meaning and **?**: And to run with it. Lonergan ran with it alone,⁹ but now there is the science that he invented, where you are only asked to pick up the baton and run as far as organizing, with a sufficient group, the puzzle of the doing and talking about out-of-bodiness.¹⁰ It is a puzzle that calls for the *Wendung zur Idee* that Simmel talked of, but now the *Wendung* is a seeding of a precise vortex of collaboration.¹¹

Here, however, I am appealing to you to stir up the molecules of your fantasy. Let you and I suppose that, amazingly, we are with Kavanagh, singing to our amygdalas “If ever you go to Dublin Town / in a hundred years or so.”¹² In a hundred years or so people may “giggle at the thought,”¹³ giggle at the “thought on

⁶ **Tunnel to Eternity** has a three-page bibliography where there are references to relevant journals.

⁷ One of a myriad of techniques for OBE. I did not try it!

⁸ These five words, what do they mean to you? It was an enormous achievement of Augustine to detect an inner word (See, *Verbum. Word and Idea in Aquinas, CWL 2, 6-9*). Our efforts are geared to envisage, each in a contemporary straining inner word, the home that is to be our inner word meshed into the strange shared eschatological neurochemistry of the mind of Jesus.

⁹ We will get to his run in *Futurology 4*, “Thomas Aquinas and Eschatology.”

¹⁰ Think of this in terms of the illustration that is the collecting of texts that give varying accounts of, e.g., “seeing an operation on me from the ceiling of the room” or such. It is not a terribly burdensome initial effort. But notice the lift that research gets if one identifies “the room” as a cranial product in the teller and in oneself. Then one is beginning to glimpse the problem as **calling for** a fuller complex chemodynamic analysis than that emerging in opposition to the so-called objectivity of the accounting and the accounters. But the fuller analysis demands the dedication of groups in FS₂. The **calling for** is a baton exchange from FS₁ to FS₂, all the better for it being as precise a calling as possible.

¹¹ As some of you may remember, I began the long series of 117 **Cantower** essays with attention to, paralleling with, and sublating of, **Vorticism**, Pound’s movement of the 1920s. In this essay and in the following series I hope to develop a sublating of **Surrealism**, a movement of the same period. See note 24 below.

¹² This is a line from the poem “If Ever You Go to Dublin Town,” by the 20th century Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, which Kavanagh used to sing – and I sang later – round Dublin. I used the mood of the poem throughout the book mentioned above, in note 3.

¹³ Another line from Kavanagh’s poem.

method"¹⁴ that Lonergan wrote of in those first two pages of *Method*.¹⁵ Giggling, then, in 2114. Theology "included in a list not of sciences but of academic disciplines"?¹⁶ **What a funny old alchemical idea! Theology is now, 2114**, a piece and peace of futurology, cycling, weaving, and sloping, the "price ... paid ... not to remain a mediocrity..."¹⁷

By then Chapter Eight of *Insight* could be the air apparent of a serious sub-culture that ventilates town, gown, and clown.

But my better sense of date of the apparentness, the time of that global break forward longed for in the first section of chapter 17 of *Insight*, is the world, altogether beyond present fantasy, of 9011 A.D., a serious cultural "Arrival in Cosmopolis."¹⁸ Still, the "could be" is in your hands, your hands disappearing in this next decade.¹⁹

People like Liddy and Morelli have nudged us towards that poise, and it has been part of my own pedagogical effort since I began teaching philosophy in the mid-1960s: but is it a classroom psychic presence? There is a desperate need for effective attention to the seeds of that psychic presence in a flow of books.²⁰ I recall my own struggle with the beginning of chapter 8 of *Insight*: for me the last block to a first glimpse of what the book was about. I spent a good deal of the winter of 1964-65 brooding on, in, about, the road to a heuristic notion of the notion of

¹⁴ The first three words of the first chapter of *Method in Theology*. The final *Posthumous* essays (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous.html>) put these words in a radically new and Trinitarian context.

¹⁵ Perhaps the greatest scandal of Lonerganism is its dodging of the meaning of those two first pages. We need to face that challenge head-on. My December *Futurology* 6, "The MuzzleHim Brotherhood," is my very compact expression of the need for the challenge.

¹⁶ *Method in Theology*, 3.

¹⁷ *Method in Theology*, 4.

¹⁸ "Arriving in Cosmopolis" is available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/archive8.pdf>

¹⁹ Controversy around Lonergan's extreme realism called out such sloganing as: "If this hand in front of my face is not my hand, then we are trapped with Kant." Well, the hands you can raise now in front of your face are real, but ho, ho, those are not your real hands. *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations: Self-Axis of the Great Ascent* (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/wealth.pdf>) has a helpful chapter 6, "The Inside-Out of Radical Existentialism," with exercises towards the disappearance of the so-real hands.

²⁰ The central issue at present is not books but settled busyness. This is most true of old hands at Lonergan studies, but it infests younger efforts, even those of solid good will. It is not easy to step back from current demands for the sake of the serious adventure of self-discovery. The intended series of 25 seminars that gave rise to the incomplete *FuSe* essays died under the pressures of a massively disorientated culture. So we need a break from settled busyness, but I think it must begin in classrooms, seeding pedagogical texts.

thing.²¹ I had been round that area since I moved from the study of general relativity into the reading of *Verbum* and *Insight* in 1956. My first conversation with Lonergan, Easter 1961, was a halfway date²² when he talked of the strangeness of the shift to identifying the already-out-there-now as what it is.

What it is!²³ How could we possibly deal adequately, critically, with the abundance of OBE and NDE accounts without that context? Further, as we will glimpse the asking better in *Futurology 7*, "Time and Eternity," how are we to figure out a heuristics of the place of the already-out-there-now in everlastingness without battling through *Insight* chapter 8? Concretely, how are we to read chapter 3, "The Real World," of *Tunnel to Eternity*, without that leap into **surrealism**?²⁴ Here you are, read the beginning of that chapter:

Core experiences in the NDE scenario occur in a setting that we can accept or recognize as a spiritual world. It is entirely unlike our familiar physical world, not so much in its particular features as in its attributes.

²¹ I would note the too-gentle pedagogy of Lonergan's language in the beginning of section 1 of *Insight* chapter 8. Lonergan is not pushing it. "[T]he notion of a thing involves a new type of insight." *Insight*, CWL 3, 270. Yes, indeed, but the heuristic notion of that notion is a quite new ballpark.

²² I use the word *date* ambiguously here. Interpersonal conversations are vital to growth in this area of climbing to the position and, further, easing into a position, even protopossession, where the date disappears.

²³ Identifying the already-out-there-now in its post-pilgrim status is a key problem in resurrection eschatology. But the pilgrim identification, naïve at first, but slowly and increasingly sophisticated in neurochemical heuristic, is the road there. This is a topic for later essays.

²⁴ I had best comment on my moving to the use of *surrealism* for what Lonergan called *critical realism*, but obviously my comment is remote in its context of the notes of this essay, the symphony of this alienated life. I happily then, THEN, take a painting of 1942 as my symbol of the shift in names, since it was in that year that Lonergan produced his surrealist, and correct, view of economics, that still waits in the wings of our muddled start of humanity's journey. My choice of symbol is Max Ernst's 1942, "Surrealism and Painting." About the painting I quote from H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art*, Princeton, 1977, page 357, on which page you can see, seize, a black-and-white image of the painting, but there is a coloured copy of the painting appended on page 6 below. The painting shows "a monstrous beast made of smoothly rounded sections of human anatomy, serpents, and bird's heads. The monster is daintily making an abstract drawing. Possibly the work reflects something of the continuing warfare between surrealism and abstraction. The interest in geometry, which Ernst satirized in this and other paintings, had nevertheless reappeared in his work of the 1950s and 1960s; he explored minute crystalline structures and vast constellations in space to create a universe simultaneously visible in microscope and telescope (*Mundus Est Fabula*, 1959)." An image of the latter painting appears on the next page of Arnason's book.

Many odd parallels between Ernst and Lonergan occur to me. Lonergan did not satirize geometry but saw it as a bridge to creating an inner universe which yet was surreally true: each of us has to weave our way as pilgrims and beyond ('sur' in old French) to paint daintily and divinely the neurodynamics that depict that universe in the full-filled field of being. But now I ramble towards my ramblings of *Futurology 7*, "Time and Eternity".

While those who find themselves in this beautiful realm report that they see such things as mountains, hills, meadows, forests, gardens, and even palaces and cities, they speak of colors that they have never seen on earth that are more beautiful than they have ever experienced.²⁵

That chapter of *Tunnel to Eternity* goes on for 12 pages, haunted and crippled by the problem of getting a serious grip on what is real, **really real** as opposed to really real. The gripping is the tough long climb from the beginning of chapter 8 to pages 413, when you are offered the option of opting for the really real.²⁶ I describe that long climb in various places, such as those mentioned in the previous note, so there is no point in rambling further here. The following essays will talk of various aspects of, and aids to, that climb, but in them always there is the central effort to begin to glimpse what is needed if we are to do the first specialty of the eight to which doing Lonergan invites us. Those specialties are to speak globally to people, especially when the topic becomes the futurology of the ultimate that is "their destiny,"²⁷ "of colors that they have never seen on earth that are more beautiful than they have ever experienced."

²⁵ **Tunnel to Eternity**, 49.

²⁶ "The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan," *Philosophical Studies* (Ireland), 1962 (also available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/archive4.pdf>), homed in on the difficulty of climbing to that position, especially the difficulty of not slipping into a naïve meaning of being when reading chapter 12, or imagining that you have arrived at a solution to the epistemological problem somewhere before that brutal challenge in chapter 14, a challenge which in the first edition was on the turn of the page 388, a possible shocking turn in one's life. Over forty years later, the 2002 *Cantower 9*, "Position, Poission, Protopossession" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower9.pdf>) talked of the climb and messed around, in the discussion of protopossession, with seeds of my present struggle. There is better messing in my effort of a decade later, 2012, in the two essays, *Posthumous 8*, "My Story, His Story, Position" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous-08.pdf>) and *Posthumous 9*, "Poission, Comparison, Finite Processions" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous-09.pdf>).

²⁷ *Method in Theology*, 292.

Appendix
Max Ernst's 1942 *Surrealism and Painting*

