

Futurology 3

Pannenberg, Space, Time, and Eternity

You have by now tuned in, I hope, to the direction of my present effort. It is a fresh beginning, yes, but it has a set of contexts that is gradually to emerge. The key issue is your growing appreciation of the need for, and nature of, a full concreteness of functional research. That concreteness – “what is good, always is concrete”¹ – is to be achieved by cycling, spiraling, endlessly, towards the luminous presence in the community of specialists of keen attention to detail twined into the fullest heuristic of the **field**.²

The secondary pointing of the previous essay was to a cultural reality – might I call it *out-of-body reachings*? – that is not being swung seriously into the Tower cycling. If it is thus spiraled in, then, with a lag depending on the level of seriousness, there is brought into the global villages an enlarged perspective on such realities. Let me illustrate oddly this need of concrete seriousness by referring back to the quotation at note 1, “what is good, always is concrete.” We are ever in need of local enlargements of perspective to get seriously into that statement’s meaning, or to get it seriously into us. The shift from Thomas’s axiomatics to Lonergan’s cyclics grounds cumulative results in that enlargement, but one needs a growing commonsense luminous bending towards the seriousness of the concrete.³ So, I think of my own present seriousness in working through the collected seasons of *Glee*.⁴ Might I suggest, for your musing, that there might be more enlargement of perspective in its dancing and singing and sexuality than in the stale male mincing of morals of Catholic moral teaching? Rachel’s boobs and Archie’s crotch are good

¹ *Method in Theology*, 27. This is the first sentence of Lonergan’s chapter on “The Human Good.”

² “The field is the universe, but my horizon defines *my* universe.” *Phenomenology and Logic*, CWL 18, 199. I put in the italicized *my* originally to point to Lonergan’s voice emphasis. In our present context it is the deeper significance of emphasizing the challenge of eschatological heuristics: *my* horizon lifted to community in the neurodynamics of Jesus gloriously minding.

³ This growing, and the cultivation of it, is the haunting mood of the book *Futurology Express*, continued here in its haunting and hounding of those interested in effecting global progress. Let me give you a page-nudge in the matter: page 571 of *Insight*, where you now think of those first two lines, about not freeing man from symbol and sign, in a fresh reading of the beginning of the second paragraph, “For our inquiry has swung round in a circle.” Think of Lonergan’s reread of this statement that is the discovery of the circle that is to solve pragmatically the problem of this first section of chapter 17 and the last section of *Insight*’s chapter 7. See further note 18 below.

⁴ The television series *Glee* starts its fifth season in the autumn of 2013, alas, without Cory Monteith, who died here in Vancouver a month ago. The rewatching is, was, now, indeed, in a new puzzling context of Cory’s new exuberant dance. See too the next note.

and concrete.⁵ But I digress. Or do I? Is there not a great absence of such concreteness in the attempts of Russell and Pannenberg and others to envisage the everlasting life of us lonely hierarchic entities?⁶

I turn now to the book that is central to this little essay: *Time and Eternity. Pannenberg, Physics, and Eschatology in Creative Mutual Interaction*.⁷ Obviously, I am not going to tackle its remoteness from the concrete of real physics, real eschatological heuristics, or real life in these few pages, but I do intend to return to that remoteness, and its results, later.⁸ I wish here to stick with my project of getting us, in elementary suggestiveness, towards the mood of adventuring into functional research. Are there anomalies – good and bad out-reachings – in *Time in Eternity* that need cycling? In so far as one is decently gripped by the contemporary standard model, one can detect such anomalies, and we shall spread our wings in that area in the later essay. But my interest at present is in a simpler follow-up, one that will recur when we move to muse over Moltmann and Boff in *Futurology* 5.

So: catch 22! I literally mean here that we should have a shot at catching the meanings of page 22 in both *Time and Eternity* and in *Insight*. I don't expect you to have the first book, or indeed the second. I will tune you in sufficiently to both pages.

The turn of page 21 to 22 of *Time and Eternity* is on the following sentence, key to the entire book. "My goal is to offer a reformulation of the theological relation between eternity and omnipresence based / on the spacetime interpretation of SR," Special Relativity. First, I note that the word *interpretation* occurs 15 times on the page. Secondly I identify the key topic: "block universe"⁹ thinking's conclusion is

⁵ I am thinking of the third Episode of the second Season with title *Grilled Cheezus*, where Finn, acted by Cory Montieth, cooks a cheese sandwich and finds it topped by an image of Jesus. One of his kneeling requests to Jesus is to get his hands on Rachel's boobs. There is a wonderful shot of him in the moment of his success looking up at the heavenly camera murmuring his thank-you. The other incident mentioned: wheel-chaired Archie remarking to his potential girl-friend about his undamaged penis.

⁶ Details of the book are given in and at the next footnote. We won't get into these attempts here, but I should give the key Pannenberg references for those interested in preparing for our spring 2014 follow-up. So, Pannenberg has relevant short articles: [1] "Eternity, Time and Space," *The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Templeton Foundation Press, Philadelphia, 2007, 163-74; [2] "Eternity, Time and the Trinitarian God," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 39, no. 1 (2000), 9-14.

⁷ The author is Robert John Russell, published by University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. Hereafter *Time and Eternity* and RJR.

⁸ *Futurology* 7, "Time and Eternity."

⁹ Quoted from that page, where it is in quotation marks already. The quoted text immediately following above says what is meant. I give the meaning a larger twist in note 20 below.

that “there is no objective distinction between what we call past and future. Instead, all events in life, history, and the universe are just ‘there’ in the frozen geometry of spacetime, and the flow of time that is so deeply given to our personal experience is an illusion.”

I simply ask, him and you, what might be meant by the three words *objective*, *illusion*, and *interpretation*? Pause please, RJR and you.

So I turn, after that pause of yours, to the last lines of *Insight's* page 22: “There are two quite different realisms. There is the incoherent realism, half-animal and half-human, that poses as a half-way house between materialism and idealism, and on the other hand there is an intelligent and reasonable realism between which and materialism the halfway house is idealism. The beginning, then, not only is self-knowledge and self-appropriation / but also a criterion of the real.” The halfway house is the world of **illusion** that was a topic in the previous essay. The **objective** is what is caught spontaneously in bright head-nodding, but luminously only in hard-won self-knowledge. That self-knowledge is an **interpretation** of “our personal experience” of, for example, doing special relativity properly.

I should leave it at that, and I’ll try to leave it, and indeed succeed to leave it, through postponing enlargements till *Futurology 7*, “Time and Eternity,” in the spring of 2014. But you are with me, I hope, on the main point? Functional Research presupposes a sufficient incarnation of the Standard Model. Researching the writings of RJR for worthwhile anomalies requires the difficult poise on reality, objectivity and the illusionary shades of halfway houses. The anomalies are to be moved on in the cycle, preferably without RJR’s name, or Pannenberg’s. What of talking to RJR? That task, or some equivalent, is to be faced at the end of the cycle, in the transition from FS₈ to C₉. Furthermore, it is important to intussuscept the suggested methodological moves. If we are to get from “academic discipline”¹⁰ to science “yielding cumulative and progressive results”¹¹ we have to cut out the usual namings and comparisons and dance, luminously naked in the Company of the Standard Model, in the data.

This usual comparison business is the stuff of the “academic discipline” approach and it maims RJR’s efforts as he launches into Part Two.¹² But, you may say, am I not making comparisons all the time in these essays?

¹⁰ *Method in Theology*, 3: the final words.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹² See *Time and Eternity*, pp. 283 ff. I was tempted to enter into this in a fulsome fashion here, but it would be a huge and complex task. Perhaps I shall come back to comment on it as I finish this particular

Let us be clear on what I am doing here. I am operating mainly in some feeble general form of **C₉**, trying both to spark interest in functional collaboration, that tough “third way,”¹³ and to give further¹⁴ hints on how to attempt the first functional specialty. In these few initial essays I am bringing forth the discomfiting notion of prerequisites. Such prerequisites regularly eliminate contemporaries from the Tower work, except in so far as positive and negative anomalies are detected. And yes, I am rambling round. I have been rambling around for decades but not as focused as here.¹⁵ So, I raise again the same issue of the prerequisite of a heuristically-accurate understanding space and time as I did in a previous context. It would be helpful to ramble back to that context and its heuristic challenge in your broodings about this and the previous *Futurology* essay. That ramble would tune you to the efforts of goodly company: the honest dying struggle of Merleau-Ponty to find his way out of the world of halfway houses. Let me, then, point you to a present serious existential struggle with the same topic, but secularized, of space and time. It is from *Field Nocturne* 36, “Desire and Distance”, and I am quoting Renaud Barbaras.¹⁶

sub-sequence of essays, *Futurology* 1-7 (recall the text at note 8 above). RJR takes up the views of a series of authors before arriving at Pannenberg’s view which he seeks to modify in “a new flowing time interpretation of special relativity based on Pannenberg’s eternal co-presence and the covariant theological correlation of eternity and omnipresence” (ibid., 289). In the previous essay I noted the need of Standard Model components that are grounded in *Insight* chapter 8. In this chapter I am pointing to the need for components provided by ingesting *Insight* chapter 5, with the addition of the pointers in the second half of *Insight* 537, on “being in space,” etc. I would note that those pointers lead to the key text starting 11 lines before the end of the page, “so it comes about.” That key text leads us neatly to the Standard Model demands for reading “Thomas Aquinas on Eschatology,” which is the title and topic of the next essay. I presume that you have, by now, tuned into my strategy in these essays: I am slowly accumulating a descriptive identification of components needed for the functional research of eschatology.

¹³ *Method in Theology*, 4.

¹⁴ *FuSes* zero-9 (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse.html>) are the primary set of hints.

¹⁵ The problem of appreciating pointers to a more complex and refined focus meshes with the problem of luminous adult growth and the problem of listening, over years, in a manner that keeps one’s psychic chemistry open to the climb. Today, for instance, I received an e-mail from a colleague who remarked of the book *Futurology Express* – and should have known better – “another introduction?” The book sublates Burckhardt’s view of history in a manner that would have startled the me of a year ago.

¹⁶ Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon. Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, translated by Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, Indiana University Press, 2004, 204. It is the first paragraph of the subsection of the chapter “Originary Spatio-Temporality,” with title “Philosophy and Space.” This piece of text is quoted at footnote 16 of *Field Nocturne* 36, “Desire and Distance.” One should add the context of the next *Field Nocturne* there; indeed the entire struggle of those 41 *Field Nocturnes* is a nudge towards a new seriousness regarding “study of an organism.” The focus there, on a single paragraph of *Insight* 489 beginning “study of an organism begins from the thing-for-us,” was on the pilgrim organism,

Merleau-Ponty's reflections on space, which several paragraphs of 'Eye and Mind' provide, are implied by his interrogation of vision. Vision alone gives me access to what is not me, to what is 'fully and simply'. To see is not to coincide blindly with the object, but to unfold an interiority. Insofar as they are seen, the things do not rest in themselves at an absolute distance, but they nonetheless remain far away, thick. They recede into a distance which, measured from me, is nevertheless proximity. Spatiality is then synonymous with the 'being-there' [*l'être-là*] of the thing, with its appearance as thing. The attempt to conceive spatiality is an attempt to draw a little nearer to the heart of the experience, a little nearer to the carnal chiasm.

That final sentence of Barbaras seems a good place to end. The attempt to conceive spatiality is an attempt to draw a little nearer to the heart of the experience, a little nearer to the carnal chiasm. Without an attempt to understand that simplest context of our being, that "natural bridge"¹⁷ to human studies, we can only waffle around in descriptive opinions. But in the attempt to understanding we must leave simple existentialist moods and metaphors in favour of generalized empirical method¹⁸ within functional collaboration.¹⁹ At least RJR steps into the deep waters of physics; but axial truncation establishes a "blocked universe"²⁰ for him and for Pannenberg, and RJR's "Creative Mutual Interaction" is only a faint echo of pieces of the heuristic potential of the Standard Model.²¹

flower or friend. One needs that study if one is to lift oneself to an explanatory heuristics of the pseudo-organism that is to be the ultimate reality.

¹⁷ The first page of *Insight* chapter 5, "Space and Time," *CWL* 3, 163.

¹⁸ My usual reference on this is to the top of page 141 of *A Third Collection*: a balance attention to outreach and outreach. One can add the COPON principle. But push further – see note 3 above – the fantasy of a global cultural luminous reaching that would put us in the ethos moving us towards the world of G.M. Hopkins.

¹⁹ As with the previous note, there are various references that could be followed. I would suggest the same linking as in the previous note, to the concrete mentioned in note 3, and add that central essay of the failed FuSe series, *FuSe* 10, "Contexts of Functional Interpretation" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/fuse-10.pdf>).

²⁰ Recall note 9. Above I have *blocked* instead of *block*. The "block universe," in some popular form, strangles eschatological thinking so it is worth the attention that RJR gives it. His attention is faulty, with the flaw described on page 73 of *A Second Collection*. His faulty attention is a general handicap in thinking out a serious eschatological heuristics, and we must postpone tackling the handicap and the heuristics till we come to the 6th and 7th essays in this series.

²¹ "Creative Mutual Interaction" is discussed in *Time in Eternity* on pages 70-75. It is diagrammed on page 73. Two boxes, one for Theology and one for Science, are connected by various lines. It has good points but in the main it is not at all in the ballpark of the omnidisciplinary cyclic dynamic of global Tower collaboration. It provides a particularly good instance of a project in functional research.