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PHILIP MCSHANE: THE FIRST FORTY YEARS

CONN O'DONOVAN

As I struggle to word some reflections on McShane I keep recalling how he laughed at me one day in the Autumn of 1960, when he was leading me into Lonergan. I was sitting in my room in Milltown Park, Dublin, early in my third year of theology, hand under chin, brow wrinkled, puzzling over the original dust-cover of *Insight***,** which I hope is still available to students of Lonergan. He just kept on laughing until I finally exclaimed (among other things), "Aha!," when insight finally yielded me the outline of a puzzled person, hand under chin, looking at me. Six to nine months previously, before he had begun his formal four-year study of theology, he had found me entering on a minor *via inventionis*, reading St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*, and had gently but quickly moved me to the first of the *Verbum* articles. Beginning with these (for me) memorable moments, I shall attempt to move back and forward, to earlier and later times that I shared with McShane and, with his help, back beyond those earlier times to the time of his conception in Glasgow.

McShane writes jokingly and helpfully that his biography needs a twist on the title of Carl Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections***,** to yield *Memories, Screams, Deflections*. He says that we shared many of the screams in his final years in the Jesuits, and suggests that it might be worth while discovering from what exactly he was deflected. For those who read this *Festschrift* with serious existential concern what is surely most important is the present drive and direction, shown in an astonishing million-word project, begun not many years after a

declared retirement from writing for public consumption, which McShane sees as continuous with an original drive and direction, “that somehow was, and is, however shabbily, maintained.” Perhaps, with his help, I may return to the present and future, but now I must twist backwards to more comfortable terrain.

My first meeting with McShane was in the Autumn of 1952, in Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin, the home of Jesuit scholastics who, having completed their two-year novitiate, were studying for degrees in Arts or Science at University College, Dublin. The Novice Master, Fr Donal O’Sullivan, had allowed him to take vows, in spite of the risk that he would be quite unsuited to the long years of Jesuit study, not for lack of academic ability - his performance at school, in all areas, was far above average - but because he had, by the middle of the second year of his novitiate, acquired what was called a “broken head”, which meant that he was unable to study, or even to do any serious reading. After much discussion, Novice Master and novice agreed that it was worth the risk.

Not only was McShane allowed to risk university studies, he was also allowed to risk a very challenging programme of mathematics, mathematical physics, physics and chemistry. Given the “broken head” syndrome, this made me feel concern for him, having struggled through the same course myself in the academic year of 1949-50, before getting approval to divert happily into languages. As a senior, fourth-year scholastic, I felt the urge to comfort the struggling first-year, telling him not to worry if things did not work out particularly well. At the end of his first year he achieved outstanding results – three first places, including first place in physics out of 450 candidates - and then specialised in mathematics and mathematical physics for the following three years. So much for my concern and comforting! In his fourth year at UCD McShane was one of two MSc candidates. They worked through particular areas in mathematics and mathematical physics: relativity theory, quantum electrodynamics, functions of a complex variable. McShane was later to recall, on various occasions, that it was through his struggle with the classic, *Functions of a Complex*

Variable, by Whittaker and Watson,[1] that he learned how to read: it was one thing to read the short, concise chapters; it was quite another *really* to read the chapters by tackling the classic problems, with famous names attached, at the end of each chapter.

Before following McShane through the next stage of his Jesuit training, I want to return to the beginning. The youngest of six children, three girls and three boys, Philip was born on February 18th, 1932, in Bailieboro, County Cavan. His father was a retired Glasgow policeman from Cavan, his mother a shopkeeper from Fermanagh. Cavan is a "border county", one of the three counties of the Irish province of Ulster not retained by the British as part of Northern Ireland in 1922, while Fermanagh is one of the six counties retained. I believe that this background had a significant influence on the development in McShane of an attitude towards England that was less than warm. He certainly used to enjoy telling his doctoral colleagues in Oxford in the mid-1960's that he came from "unoccupied Ulster". Not long after his birth the family moved from farm to village public-house, and when he was aged four they moved to a public house in Parnell Street in the centre of Dublin, where they lived above the bar, and where there is still a small bar. He is happy to recall that he spent his first few weeks in Dublin in a flat in Eccles St., familiar to readers of James Joyce's *Ulysses* as the street where Leopold and Molly Bloom lived. McShane became deeply involved with Joyce only in the 1960's but I suspect that he might look on that first address in Dublin as somehow providential. In the bar of the public-house there was a lively atmosphere of piano-playing and singing. An early family addiction was the cinema, and their local cinema was the *Volta*, the first cinema in Dublin, founded by James Joyce in 1909, with the financial backing of four small businessmen from Trieste.

In 193? The McShane family moved a short distance to a house beside the river Liffey and in 194? to a house beside the river Tolka. Philip is happy to locate himself in these years with reference to rivers rather than streets, because the rivers

[1] Possibly he means E.T. Whitaker and G.N. Watson, *A Course in Modern Analysis* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1943)?

flow deeply through his psyche, bearing history, folklore, legend, saga and myth. From the public-house and from the Liffey it was a short walk to the Christian Brothers' school called *Plas Mhuire* (St. Mary's Place), which McShane attended from 193? To 1948. It was not much farther to the Jesuit School, Belvedere College, but even if they were interested in a Jesuit education, which they were not, McShane's parents could not have afforded it. Most of the boys' secondary schools in Ireland, some with primary schools attached, were run by the Christian Brothers, whose ethos combined a strong commitment to Catholic education with a strong commitment to the restoration of the Irish language and an idealised Gaelic culture. It was normal in the Brothers' schools for all subjects, except English, to be taught through the medium of Irish; *Plas Mhuire* was one of just a few schools where staff and students were obliged to speak Irish all the time. From how he appeared to me when I first met him I would have expected McShane to have been a gentle, cooperative schoolboy, but a classmate at *Plas Mhuire* says that he could be quite mischievous and at times perhaps arrogant. He recalls McShane writing a negative assessment of the special brand of self-sacrificial revolutionary republicanism associated with Patrick Pearse, the executed leader of the Easter Rising of 1916, and remarking that he would hardly expect someone who lived in Howth (as his teacher did) to agree with him. The school at *Plas Mhuire* did not offer the final two years of secondary education. McShane could have moved just around the corner to a larger, sister school, but because it was very similar, he chose to go to a much bigger, but much less "gaelic" school, O'Connell's School, also run by the Christian Brothers, and his parents approved. There he was introduced to physics and chemistry, but he remembers most of all the decisive influence that his teacher of mathematics, Kit Carroll, had on him. In his lectures later on he used to describe Carroll's teaching as "orgasmic." However, the main influence on McShane at this time was Frederic Chopin. Sometimes he would spend up to three hours battling with a *scherzo* or a *ballade*. Music was in his genes: his father was a very competent fiddler and he also played an instrument or

instruments in the police band. He had formal music lessons for several years, but he says that he only began to learn music when he gave up the lessons. Now he looks back on his "battling" with mathematics and with Chopin as central to the genesis of a humility in the face of meaning.

For a boy growing up in Dublin in the 1940's it was difficult not to feel, at least at some stage, that he had "a vocation," which was narrowly defined as a call from God to be a priest or a Religious Brother. I do not know when or how he "got" his basic vocation, but I know that living quite close to the Jesuit church of St. Francis Xavier helped to specify it, because the Jesuits, as well as being considered sympathetic, broad-minded confessors, were well-known for their foreign missionary activity and were credited with being interested in serious thinking, both of which held a strong attraction for McShane. And so, in September 1950 he entered the Jesuit novitiate and spent two years in spiritual formation, central to which was the thirty-day retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. The Novice Master, Fr Donal O'Sullivan, was ahead of his time in that he encouraged his novices to read widely and to develop an interest in music and the visual arts. Novices generally found his daily talks, called "Exhortations," interesting and inspiring, but when he asked the young McShane what he thought of them the answer he got was, "They're fine while they last, but then they just seem to follow you out of the room like hot air." McShane had a genuine affection for O'Sullivan in later years, but when I asked him recently about the origin of the "broken head" in the novitiate, he told me that it had a lot to do with the lack of a supportive environment for really serious thinking.

Having taken his vows in September, 1952, McShane moved to Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin, to begin his university studies, and so we come back to where I began. Having completed his MSc in 1956, he moved to St. Stanislaus College (colloquially known to Jesuits as "The Bog"), which was situated near Tullabeg, a very small town in the Irish midlands. There he spent three years studying philosophy, and there he met Fr John Hyde S.J., a man who had a profound influence on him. In Jesuit philosophates at that time the

principal subjects were named and taught as follows: Critica and Ontology in the first year, Cosmology and Rational Psychology in the second year, Ethics and Theodicy in the third year. Fr Hyde, who had begun teaching philosophy in 1945, was Professor of Theodicy and of the History of Ancient Philosophy from 1947 to 1962. He was a quiet, shy, ascetic man, sparing with words, always humorous and at times wickedly witty, who had established an excellent reputation as a teacher. He was admired by generations of Jesuit students for his skill in providing the data – the diagram, the metaphor, the analogy, the simple story – to encourage insight, and for his capacity for spare, clear, schematic summary. It was he who introduced McShane to Lonergan, firstly to the *Verbum* articles and, in 1958, to *Insight*, and when McShane had finished his course of Philosophy, Hyde is said to have commented, "There is nothing more that I can teach him." McShane does not recall hearing this, and says that it is, in any case, quite untrue – he is still learning from Hyde. In his years in The Bog McShane led a quiet, regular life but gave time very generously to help colleagues who were struggling with their studies or were otherwise finding life difficult. In his second year he was appointed Beadle, a kind of go-between with little authority, but with a moderate amount of responsibility for organisation and for two-way communication between the scholastics and their rulers: the Rector of the community, the Prefect of Studies, and the Minister, who was responsible for discipline and health (including the provision of adequate food, a contentious issue in those days). When the Irish Provincial Superior came on his annual visitation that year the gentle, softly-spoken McShane told him that the scholastics were treated worse than pigs. The Provincial replied, "That is a hard judgment, Mr McShane."

Having completed his study of philosophy McShane could have expected to spend 2-3 years teaching in any one of the six Jesuit schools in Ireland, or learning the language and adapting to the culture of Hong Kong/Malaysia or Zambia, where the Irish Province had a significant missionary presence. However, in response to an invitation to Jesuits worldwide from the General in Rome, he volunteered to go to Japan. He was not

accepted; instead, he was sent back to University College, Dublin, to lecture in the department of Mathematics. There he gave undergraduate courses to students of mathematical physics, engineering, and commerce, and graduate courses in special relativity and differential equations. While lecturing in UCD he lived in the nearby residence at 35 Lower Leeson Street, where Gerard Manley Hopkins had lived from 1884 to 1889. He was able to continue with his work on Lonergan and was fortunate to have as superior Fr Roland Burke-Savage, editor of the Jesuit quarterly, *Studies*, who was sympathetic to Lonergan's work, and was, incidentally, a confidant of the Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, for whom McShane was soon to develop a great affection. Burke-Savage and McShane plotted the invitation to Lonergan to come to lecture in UCD; Lonergan came the following year, 1961, and gave what are now known as The Dublin Lectures. We shall return to the 1961 visit of Lonergan below.

After a single year of teaching at UCD McShane was fast-tracked to theology, the intention being, apparently, to get him through as fast possible to teach cosmology, and so, in Autumn 1960, he moved to Milltown Park, Dublin. This was the first time that Jesuit students, who had been in Tullabeg later than 1957, the year that *Insight* was published, came to study theology at Milltown Park. Paddy Doyle, a mature student with a background in science, had, like McShane, left there in 1959 and, like McShane, he came to Milltown with a great admiration for Lonergan. McShane, however, also arrived with a strong sense of mission. He has described Milltown Park at this time as "a ghetto of commonsense eclecticism," where serious thought was not required and indeed was not encouraged. He was not alone, however, in judging Milltown harshly. I know from personal experience that in the years 1958-1962 there was considerable discontent, and even cynicism, among those Jesuit students, whether Lonergan-inspired or not, who looked on theology as something more than just a canonical prerequisite for ordination, or who had already achieved considerable success in some other field. Many of them simply went along with the system, mastering the matter presented and producing it, on request, at

examination time; others registered a kind of protest by pursuing private interests as much as possible; those inspired by Lonergan tended increasingly to raise questions in class in a manner that challenged their professors' authority, at times, unfortunately, with a crude appeal to the authority of Lonergan. We did not know then that we were living through the final years of a system that Lonergan later described as hopelessly antiquated but not yet demolished, that what was happening at Milltown was happening all over the world, and that the upheaval that was soon to come would affect much more than the traditional seminary courses in philosophy and theology. Still, whatever about other threats to the system, and whatever about wider and deeper rumblings in the Catholic Church, there is little doubt that by the time of Lonergan's visit in 1961, although his ardent devotees numbered perhaps no more that 1/8 of the total student body, many of the lecturers at Milltown Park felt threatened by him and by his followers, and most of all by McShane.

There is no doubt that the arrival of McShane at Milltown marked the beginning of a major development in Lonergan's influence in Ireland. Fr Desmond Coyle, Professor of Theology from 1948 to 1962, used to say half-seriously that it was he who "discovered" Lonergan for Ireland, and there is a slight basis for his claim. He had done doctoral studies at Woodstock, Maryland, from 1946 to 1948, and there are bound copies of the first two *Verbum* articles in the library at Milltown, with his name written on them. Having attended lectures from Coyle on Grace, however, I do not remember any reference to Lonergan. McShane recalls asking him mischievously, "Are we going to be asking, 'What is grace?' Father"? While Coyle was not an inspiring lecturer, he was a gentleman, and it was quite sad to see him, in his final couple of years, being undermined in the name of Lonergan.

Fr Michael Hurley, later the foremost ecumenist in Ireland, lecturing to us on the Trinity in 1960 (before McShane arrived), held up the *Verbum* articles and read a note from John Hyde, in response to a request for an opinion on them. The note read, "I'd sit at his feet." Hurley did not discuss the articles in any detail, however, and he himself came to feel

threatened, in the years following, by Lonergan and his followers. In 1987 he wrote with great feeling, in an Irish Jesuit newsletter, an article in which, urging "unity in diversity," he recalled "the days when the thinking of Bernard Lonergan was in the ascendant in Milltown." "I myself," he wrote, "had sat at his feet in Rome. I knew and recognized him to be an eminent thinker, but I could not bring myself to believe that he had the whole truth about everything. 'He can't be God,' I remember myself saying, 'and so his divinisation must be resisted: there can be no question of "Him only shall we serve, follow, study".' This was a difficult, painful experience. I don't brood on it, but it keeps coming back in recent years." Hurley was probably thinking particularly of the decade from 1966 to 1976, but the seeds were being sown abundantly from 1960 and McShane was certainly the principle sower.

In May, 1961, Lonergan came to Ireland, invited by Fr E. F. O'Doherty, Professor of Logic and Philosophy at University College Dublin, to give a series of lectures on *Insight* to third year honours students in philosophy, and as many others, staff and students, who wished to attend. At that time, although the situation was beginning to change, philosophy, for Irish Catholics generally, meant part of the training for priesthood. Most of those working for degrees in philosophy were clerical students and almost all of the Professors were priests. O'Doherty had written a very positive review of *Insight* and at the end of the lectures he told the audience (about 120) that they were privileged to have listened to a man who already had a permanent place in the history of philosophy. Later on he was less than happy about Lonergan, and especially about Lonerganism. In a letter to Fred Crowe, dated May 28, Lonergan, having returned to the Gregorian, commented: "success."

While in Dublin, Lonergan stayed with the Jesuit community at Lower Leeson St., where McShane had been living during the previous year. On Saturday, May 19, he went to Tullabeg to give a lecture to staff and students, and he was warmly welcomed. In the letter to Crowe, mentioned above, he wrote: "Big boom for *Insight* at Tullabeg; also for F. E.

Crowe's *Complacency and Concern…*" On Monday, May 21 (Whit Monday) he gave a lecture in Milltown Park, entitled, *Theology and Communication*. I recall thinking at the time that there was nothing in his lecture that could have antagonised those members of the faculty who were no great admirers of his. What happened after the lecture remains vividly in my mind, and in the mind of McShane. The lecture ended at about 12 noon, an hour before lunch. We had anticipated an opportunity for questions, but none was offered; this was hardly Lonergan's wish, as there had been a lively question session in Tullabeg and there would be questions also in UCD in the following days. Our Rector, who taught the course *De Ecclesia*, but seemed to spend less time on theology than on looking after the farm, gave a quick nod to the Prefect of Studies, Fr Kevin Smyth, who promptly stood up, before the applause had ended. His vote of thanks was brief and ungenerous. Carefully avoiding any praise of Lonergan himself, he said it was a great tribute to the importance *of his topic* that there was a full attendance of staff and students on Whit Monday, when there were no normal classes. He concluded by remarking that Lonergan was truly "a Danielou come to judgment," which left Lonergan looking bemused and many of us feeling angry, because Smyth, one of the few Professors highly regarded as a scholar, was in the habit of making disparaging comments about the famous and prolific French Jesuit, whom he considered something of a dilettante. About fifteen minutes later, as I stood, fuming, looking out the window of my room, I saw the Rector forking hay. After lunch a small group of us, hoping to have a brief meeting with Lonergan, waited at the exit from Milltown Park. He appeared, accompanied by McShane, who had been appointed to look after him. He smiled, we smiled, McShane smiled, then he and McShane passed by without a word. When I rebuked McShane gently later that day, he told me that he had been instructed to lead Lonergan off the premises quietly and quickly, without delaying for any conversations with scholastics. McShane confirmed this almost thirty years later; as I reflect on it now, a further twelve years on, I am surprised that he, already so willing to challenge authority in other ways, and being himself

at least partly responsible for the ungenerous reception of Lonergan, did not disobey those instructions. In the letter of May 28 to Crowe Lonergan remarked: "At Milltown Park there is a first year theologian, Mr McShane, who in regency taught maths at UC; still does a bit; has been invited to lecture in Harvard on his line in maths this Summer; top-flight enthusiast for *Insight.* About 11 more theols onto *Insight* at Milltown."

At some time during the following academic year (1961-'62), in spite of his being a threat to the system, McShane was chosen to play the principal role of "defence" in one of the annual formal debates attended by all staff and students. He totally ignored the traditional scholastic mode of presentation, which comprised definition of terms, announcement of the theological "note" assigned to the thesis being debated, a listing and brief discussion of "adversarii," and finally a proof of the thesis from Scripture, the Church Fathers, and the Magisterium of the Church, supported by a "ratio theologica." Instead, appealing to the "aliqua intelligentia, eaque fructuosissima" of Vatican I, to which Lonergan so often referred, he embarked on an impressive exercise in systematic theology.

In the Autumn of 1960 McShane wrote "The Contemporary Thomism of Bernard Lonergan," and sent it to Fr John Courtney Murray, then editor of *Theological Studies.* Courtenay-Murray sent it back to him, saying that it was not quite suitable for his purposes, but he would love to have something that would make the *Verbum* articles accessible to his readers. So McShane sent his article to the Irish journal, *Philosophical Studies*, where it was published in 1962.[2] Then, in August 1961 he wrote "The Hypothesis of Intelligible Emanations in God," to send to Courtenay-Murray.[3] Anything written by Jesuits had to be read by two appointed censors before being offered for publication, and in this case the obvious censors would be theologians. It gave McShane pleasure to think that two of his professors, who knew that he

[2] Philip McShane, "The Contemporary Thomism of Fr Bernard Lonergan," *Philosophical Studies* 11 (1961-62).

[3] Philip McShane, "The Hypothesis of Intelligible Emanations in God," *Theological Studies* 23.4 (1962).

had not yet taken a course on the Trinity, would have to read his manuscript. It was duly passed by the censors, however, and published in *Theological Studies* in 1962. During the year 1961-1962 he wrote "The Causality of the Sacraments," which was published in *Theological Studies* in 1963.[4]

During the years 1960-1962 McShane was a constant source of enlightenment and encouragement to me, and I know that he was very generous with the time he gave to others, whether they were struggling with their studies or had other problems, as he had done in Tullabeg. Two little incidents come to mind, that typify for me the McShane of that time. In my third year of theology (1961-'62) I was concerned about the danger that I would be asked to specialise in theology, with a view to returning to teach in Milltown. I told McShane that I felt I needed about ten years to be prepared for such a task. He laughed, as he so often did, and said, "Cheer up, you'll never be prepared." So I relaxed. In the following year I came to him with a problem I had just created with one of my professors, with whom I had raised a question about God and myself. After some discussion the professor said, "Well Conn, at least you must admit that God could destroy you now and recreate you identically." Believing that I had just had an insight into what Lonergan meant by essentialism, I said, "I don't think so, Father," and tried to explain why I thought that the real God, if he destroyed the real me, could not recreate the real me identically. I left my professor looking puzzled, about what exactly I don't know. Then I went straight to McShane and asked, "Am I right?" Again he laughed and said, "Don't worry, the real God couldn't even destroy you." The professor in question was the Provincial who had visited Tullabeg when McShane was Beadle. In Milltown McShane gave him Lonergan's "Finality, Love, Marriage" [5] to read and he enjoyed his comment when he returned it: "That was difficult; I had to read it twice."

From mid-1962 to mid-1966, although we kept in contact, McShane and I met only sporadically; for this period I am very

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[4] Philip McShane, "On the Causality of the Sacraments," *Theological Studies* 24.3 (1962).

[5] Bernard Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage" *CWL 4*.

reliant on his reminiscences. As he was entering his third year of theology in Autumn 1962, I was entering my tertianship, the last official stage of Jesuit training, in Germany. During that year the question of his immediate and more remote future arose. The new Rector, who was quite sympathetic, told him it would probably be better if he did his fourth year of theology elsewhere, and McShane agreed. So he went to Heythrop College, Oxford, in the Autumn of 1963, when I went to Rome to work for my doctorate in philosophy at the Gregorian. He was certainly happy to go to Heythrop, and I have been told that many of the faculty at Milltown were happy to see him go, as he would have been a very difficult fourth year student for them to handle.

McShane says that he did little theology at Heythrop, but he had great fun preparing for the "Ad gradum," the final, 2-hour oral examination covering all of philosophy and theology, with the poet Peter Levi, whose company he enjoyed again at Campion Hall Oxford, and who, like McShane, later left the Jesuits and the priesthood. Another enjoyable experience he recalls is discovering *The Blandyke Papers*, with contributions from Lonergan as a young student at Heythrop.[6] He spent most of his time, however, working on an article for the 1964 *Festschrift* in honour of Lonergan, entitled, "Insight and the Strategy of Biology." And he was very happy to receive from Lonergan the newly-published two-volume *De Deo Trino*, the second, systematic part of which he has practically worn out.

In the Autumn of 1964 McShane went to do his tertianship in Paray-le-Monial in France. He had wanted to go to France partly to improve his French, but mainly to avoid Fr Michael Connolly, now Tertian Master, but formerly Professor of Ethics, with whom he had clashed in his third year in Tullabeg. He says that he survived "a very strange year" in France, and he recalls an American Jesuit, sharing the experience, who packed his big trunk in the late Spring and sat on it, waiting for the time to leave. He spent much of that year focused on chapter 8 of *Insight*, struggling with the notion of "thing," which he eventually grasped from his image of Jonah in the

[6] Lonergan's contributions to the Blandyke papers are available at the various Lonergan Centres.

whale. He used this image later to help me and others to grasp the notion of "thing," and he included it in a couple of his books.

In 1962 the Jesuit philosophate in Tullabeg had been closed down and the students sent abroad, mainly to France and Germany. Consideration was given to continuing like this, or sharing resources with the English Province, or opening a new house of studies in Belfast (the local Bishop, apparently, having consulted his priests, said, "No, thank you!"). Eventually it was decided to send philosophy to join theology at Milltown Park, and McShane and I were to be two members of the new faculty. Where would McShane do his doctorate? At the Gregorian University Jesuit doctoral students, as well as working on their dissertations, were required to take a total of 10 courses over two years. When I conveyed this information to McShane, he was determined to avoid Rome at all costs, so in 1965 he went to Oxford. A strange choice, Oxford, for a man so opposed to the type of philosophy dominant there! Perhaps McShane relished the prospect of challenging linguistic analysis at headquarters and risking the consequences. His thesis supervisor was Rom Harré, who had quite recently published a book entitled, *Matter and Method*,[7] so McShane probably thought that he would have a reasonably good understanding of what he wanted to write about. In fact, he found Harré very tolerant and encouraging, even to the extent of taking no offence when he reached down one day, patted him on his foot and said, "Rom, if you think that is your foot, we have nothing to talk about." The thesis was entitled, "The concrete logic of discovery of Statistical Science, with special reference to problems of evolution theory." It was later published, after some re-writing, with the title, *Randomness, Statistics and Emergence*.[8] In the preface to that book McShane gives a helpful indication of how he handled the problem of writing the thesis in Oxford. He describes his work as "an attempt at inaugurating dialogue between various schools of philosophy," and continues: "Because of this, the work will obviously be difficult reading for the members of

[7] (London: Macmillan, 1964).
[8] (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1970).

any one school. It was written at Oxford, and draws on that background, yet it is not of Oxford, for its philosophic stance is continuous with the structured critical realism of Bernard Lonergan. Yet the writing was governed by an appreciation of the chasm between the two views of philosophy, and so the philosophic position presupposed by the entire work becomes explicit only in the concluding chapter."[9]

While McShane got on well with Harré, there was the obvious danger that he might have problems with examiners. Harré and he "hunted round" for suitable examiners, and Harré chose two, one a chemist and the other a biologist. There were just three people present at the defence of the thesis: the chemist, the biologist, and McShane himself, all three of them formally dressed. The examiners did not like the first chapter, "Problems of Content and Problems of Method," and wanted a simpler version. The chemist thought that the chapter on probability, which dealt with differences between the first edition of *Insight* and the second, was nothing more than mathematics. The examiners united were not prepared to award the doctoral degree without some revisions, but McShane told them not to worry, he would be happy to publish the thesis as a failed D.Phil. Oxon. Then he got up and left the room. As he was leaving the building Harré rushed after him and begged him to reconsider. McShane was not interested in making changes or additions; encouraged, however, by Harré and Lonergan, he relented. He received from Lonergan the memorable postcard with the message: "Give the fellow what he wants; it's only a union card." My own concern at that time was that McShane might later be accused of resentment or bitterness whenever he criticised Oxford philosophy, as he surely would, and I expressed my feelings in the rather rude words, "You can't shit on it until you've got it." Roughly six months after the initial defence of his thesis McShane returned to Oxford and presented himself to his examiners, having made only modest revisions, and sailed through the defence in a few minutes, with no problems at all.

In the Autumn of 1966 Jesuit philosophy came to join theology at Milltown Park. That Summer I went to Oxford for

[9] Ibid., vii.

a month, with the mandate to draft, with McShane, a two-year programme in philosophy, since the scholastics no longer had to do a three-year course. We were joined about a week later by Fr Eamonn Egan, a highly intelligent and very thoughtful and learned man, the only one of the former faculty at Tullabeg who would be a full-time member of the new faculty. He had read Lonergan and respected him, but was not a devotee. When he arrived we more or less presented him with a *fait accompli*, which obviously, and reasonably, disappointed him. He had a wonderfully clear, analytic mind, and he enjoyed discussions, preferably, it seemed at times, inconclusive ones, which was why McShane was so keen to have the draft programme completed before he came. I could find no fault, however, with a first year programme that was dominated by Philosophy of Knowledge, based on chapters 1-13 of *Insight*, comprising a course in Methodology in first semester and a course in Epistemology in second semester; neither could I object to second-year courses in Metaphysics and Philosophy of God, based on chapters 14-17 and 19-20 of *Insight* respectively, as long as McShane took God and gave me all the help I needed with whatever I had to teach. We could not control Psychology and Ethics, but there was no problem with Cosmology, because we just left it out. Given the extent of Lonergan's influence on this programme, and on another programme soon to be introduced, and McShane's enormous influence on their drafting and implementation, there was bound to be some tension. Egan, for example, while he was greatly respected, would suffer much from the "Lonergan says" attitude of his less tactful students and from the serious questioning of others, who had been greatly influenced by Lonergan, mainly through McShane. Michael O'Brien, still at an early stage of his career, teaching a course in Ethics based on Joseph de Finance, which in itself should not have been particularly problematic, had trouble from the beginning, I think mostly because of his style of teaching, and left Milltown in 1970. McShane was a wonderful teacher, but his dismissive attitude towards practically all major philosophers and theologians provoked some resentment among his less secure colleagues.

Early in 1968 the faculties of philosophy and theology at

Milltown agreed in principle to integrate the two disciplines in a single six-year course. A four-man committee was appointed to prepare a draft programme: James Healy, Dean of theology and Patrick O'Connell, Professor of Church History, representing theology, McShane and O'Donovan representing philosophy. Healy, still at an early stage of his teaching career, but already established as an impressive moral theologian, was very sympathetic to Lonergan, and he was happy with a division of content suggested by Fred Crowe in his "Notes on the Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity" (Regis College, Toronto, 1965-1966), provided by McShane. When the faculties met to discuss the draft, it received quite broad support, but there was also much opposition to it, on various grounds. In retrospect, I cannot say how much of this opposition was specifically anti-Lonergan, but I know that a significant amount of it was anti-Lonerganist and reflected a resentment of philosophers presuming to pronounce on method in theology, and resentment of the extent of McShane's influence in particular. At the full meeting O'Connell actually repudiated the draft, obviously feeling that he had been rather steamrolled at the drafting sessions. After many hours of often tense debate, a much-modified programme was agreed, which many accepted as a good compromise. McShane's view was that the original, complex plan had been butchered and that what remained demanded inverse insights.

The integrated programme went into operation in October, 1968, and there were problems with it from the beginning, but in any case its days were already numbered. The newly-established Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, a joint-venture of many religious orders and congregations, centred on Milltown Park, brought a big increase in the number of staff and students, but it also led to a change to the traditional structure of having philosophy first, then theology. The philosophy faculty, enlarged to cope with increased student numbers, included the Jesuits Bill Mathews and Peter Coughlan, and the laymen Garrett Barden and Andy Johnston, all greatly influenced by Lonergan and by McShane. There were several new, Lonergan-inspired members of the theology faculty too, the Jesuit Raymond Moloney, the Carmelite John

Lawler and the Oblate Frank Dromey, but they, and the already well-established and much-admired John Hyde, were more discrete than their counterparts in philosophy. Overall, however, the new Institute came to be considered as a something of a threat to the philosophy department in UCD and to philosophy and theology in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, the university college run by the Irish Catholic hierarchy. The threat was a broad one, but Lonergan was certainly a significant part of it. So the final five of McShane's first forty years were spent in a strongly Lonergan-inspired environment, but with growing opposition, from both within and without.

Since 1968 McShane and I had been discussing the prospect of having Lonergan come to Dublin, to give a course of lectures on method in theology at Milltown Park, both of us having experienced similar events at Boston College and having spent time with Lonergan at Regis College, Toronto. He came in 1971, and the two-week *Lonergan Summer School* attracted much publicity, with extensive newspaper coverage of his arrival and brief reports on national radio and television. About 160 attended, roughly 1/3 from Ireland, but only one each from the philosophy departments at UCD and Maynooth; from Maynooth there also came two theologians, in response to an invitation I had sent to the editor of the *Irish Theological Quarterly*, and one student. McShane's main responsibility was to take care of Lonergan himself. We were rather anxious about his health and wanted to make him as relaxed and comfortable as possible. To this end we arranged for him to stay with a small Jesuit community, close to Milltown Park, which included a friend from the time at the Gregorian, Fr Kevin Quinn, whom Lonergan used to describe as the economist with whom he had hoped to collaborate, but who went off to Zambia. Each day McShane would collect Lonergan and accompany him to the hall where the lectures would take place; he would protect him from intrusions during his mid-morning break and bring him back to his base before lunch. The procedure would be the same for afternoon question sessions. We were trying to protect Lonergan from exhausting over-exposure, but McShane arranged individual contacts for

some people who particularly wanted to talk with him, and he put a great deal of thought and effort into planning lunches and dinners, in homes and restaurants, to provide good food and drink, with relaxed conversation, both for Lonergan and for carefully chosen groups. He also arranged, knowing Lonergan's great interest, visits to the movies, and a less than wholly satisfactory visit to the famous Abbey Theatre, to which Lonergan is surely referring in *Caring about Meaning* when he says, "I remember going to the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and I couldn't understand a word they were saying. The beautiful, lilting Irish talk was unintelligible to me!"[10] There was also an informal meeting with a small group us, including Kevin Quinn, which McShane obviously thought might yield some fruit, but which appeared not to do so. Years later Lonergan was still referring to Quinn, but McShane recalls that he said to him at the time, "There goes my economist." He also recalls how, as he walked back with Lonergan one day from the nearby residence of the Jesuit Provincial, Lonergan asked, "What century were we in back there?"

The final half-dozen years of McShane's first forty were very busy, very productive, increasingly social, at times controversial, at times tumultuous, at times distressing to himself and others. At Milltown he taught wonderful courses in Methodology and Philosophy of God. He also gave public lectures at Milltown and at UCD. He wrote three books: *Towards Self-Meaning*[11] (with contributions from Garrett Barden), *Music That is Soundless*,[12] and *Plants and Pianos*,[13] and he edited the proceedings of the Florida Conference of 1970.[14] The title, *Music That is Soundless* came to McShane as

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[10] *Caring about Meaning: Patterns in the Life of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. P. Lambert, C. Tansey, C. Going (Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1982), 92.

[11] (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969).

[12] (Dublin: Milltown Institute, 1969).

[13] (Dublin: Milltown Institute, 1970).

[14] Philip McShane, ed. *Foundations of Theology: Papers of the International Lonergan Conference* Volume 1 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1971)*; Language, Truth and Meaning: Papers of the International Lonergan Conference* Volume 2 (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1971).

he walked along Sandymount Strand (a Joyce-filled environment) reading the poetry of St. John of the Cross, and he had the chapter headings in his head by the time he got back to Milltown Park. In December, 1971, as he was approaching his fortieth birthday, McShane handed John Todd the corrected proofs of the index to *Method in Theology*.

I have just remembered reading some of the typescript of *Plants and Pianos* and thinking that McShane's written expression was not as precise as it might be, that he was beginning to let language run away with him. I said something like this: "But Phil, what you are actually saying there is this …, what the words actually mean is this…" He paused for a moment, then laughed a little and said, "Maybe that *is* what I mean." Without wishing to make too much of it, I now wonder was I then witnessing in McShane the emergence of a deliberate, self-consciously new approach to language and meaning? Was he perhaps deciding to allow language to run away with him, but somehow under his control, and not to allow himself to be controlled by already controlled meaning? Was this a key moment in the development of his own special kind of creative scholarly writing?

Always deeply involved with music, McShane, towards the late 1960s taught himself how to play the guitar, and loved to sing songs of the 60s, such as "Blowing in the Wind" and "The Sounds of Silence," as well as traditional Irish-language songs. He even composed a haunting melody to go with the words of a short poem by Patrick Kavanagh, "Wet Evening in April":

> The birds sang in the wet trees
> And as I listened to them it was a hundred years from now
> And I was dead and someone else was listening to them
> But I was glad I had recorded for him
> The melancholy.[15]

In that final period of his first forty years McShane had many meetings and parties with his special Methodology

[15] Patrick Kavanagh, *Collected Poems* (London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964), 140.

Group, and with others; there were, increasingly, late evenings followed by early starts next morning, so that some of us wondered how long he could last the pace. And some were scandalised by his lifestyle. Some of the young people whom he had profoundly affected no longer found McShane as friendly and lovable as before and felt, I think, that he was being rather arrogant and intolerant. There was a definite estrangement from Garrett Barden, on whom he had had a profound influence, and who had collaborated with him on *Towards Self-Meaning*; other close associates, who were now trying to establish themselves somewhat independently of him, were rather hurt by the way he spoke to them, and at the same time were concerned that his lifestyle might bring him to harm. He had also begun to alienate members of what might be called the Lonergan Establishment, the depth and breadth of whose desire to know he had begun to question publicly. This is a delicate area that requires fuller treatment than I can give it here, so I shall offer only a brief comment. I have never known anybody so eager to help people to learn, so skilled at creating and disposing phantasms for those whom he judged to be genuinely and humbly eager for insights. If, however, he came to believe that people felt they already had a thorough grasp of the implications of Lonergan's thought, it upset him greatly, and he resorted, in speech and writing, to some sarcasm and, I think, to some deliberate obscurity, analogous to the obscurity of Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, in a bid to enforce humility in the face of meaning.

Here I must end, at least for now. I have been offering some not very profound reflections on a very good friend and an extraordinarily gifted man. I am very happy to have been so closely associated with him during years that were crucial for both of us, to have spent many night-hours at Milltown Park, aided by John Jameson and occasionally, for want of better, by pilfered altar wine, attempting to conceive, affirm, and implement the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being. I am also happy that I have been able, in more recent years, to maintain at least a heuristic of a heuristic of what he is doing. Ad multos annos, Phil!

Conn O'Donovan is perhaps best known in Lonergan circles from *The Way to Nicea*, his translation of the first part of the first volume of Lonergan's *De Deo Trino*. His long association with Philip McShane is plotted above.

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