

COMMENT

SISTER MARY OF THE SAVIOR (CATHLEEN M. GOING)

Professor Philip McShane has been a resource for us in North America for many years now – first as furthering collaboration with Lonergan and then also as an editor and interpreter of Lonergan’s work. The first fact known to me about him remains a key for understanding him. Shortly before the International Lonergan Congress (Florida, 1970), some of us at Thomas More Institute (Montreal) were making excerpts for Congress discussion from each participant’s paper as it arrived in advance. The contributions from Ireland included not one but two papers from a certain Philip McShane: one on musicology, and “Image and Emergence: Towards an Adequate *Weltanschauung*.”¹ Enter Philip McShane the generalist – a title full of honour, as readers of Lonergan will recognise. His brief introduction to the second volume of Congress papers (his first time in print on this continent, I believe) was concerned with one of his continuing themes: the incredible length of the process needed for appropriation of Lonergan’s thought, individually or socially.

My note on the “Implementation” article indicates what I have learned from it (a) about its author, (b) about Lonergan, and (c) about implementation of Lonergan’s transcendental method. My sheaf of quotations from the article may offer a focus – not distorting, I hope – different from the reader’s own.

What I have learned, then:

¹ Professor McShane mentions the two papers in the present article (18). My memory suggests that there was a third – on zoology – but I cannot offer proof. Hereafter, my references to pages in the article “Implementation” will be incorporated into my “Comment” at the pertinent places.

a) about the author ...

As I have long supposed, to understand Professor McShane well one must read Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*.² An interest in the structures of music is helpful also. And "elevations" such as scientists practice are obviously pertinent to the writing we are considering.

It is a pleasure to consider the questions and hints Professor McShane offers – whichever ones each of us can catch. For example, in regard to integration – so pervasive a theme in Lonergan and the core and goal of every implementation of method – he raises the question whether a feminine perspective, which he calls "integrative," might be a "pivot" for the emergence of the third stage of meaning (to his mind, not yet arrived) (14, n.7).

I learned from the paper that Professor McShane worked out the index of *Method in Theology*. He points to doing an index as an exercise or instance of implementation. His calling attention (15, n.10) to the absence of the term "implementation" in the Lonergan indices³ is instructive about the understanding necessary generally for implementation as well as about the talents needed for the surprisingly delicate, even foundational, work of indexing.

I experience in the paper some moves which suggest difficulties for collaboration over the years (in Joyce's wonderful phrase: "the intermisunderstanding of minds") – the criticisms; the thought progressing as though by distraction. One is sent on so many errands, down so many trails.

The author seems by turns despairing of his readers (as though he were saying: "Well, someone may pick up something somewhere along the line") and by turns enormously trusting that they will indeed carry forward at least some of his suggestions,⁴ if enough and varied hints are given.

In the wealth of hints and nudges, in the invitations,⁵ we

² Prof. McShane will not consider this a reproach. See for example his references to Joyce in the 1995 *MJLS* journal article cited in note 5 below.

³ "Implementation" is absent also from the *Combined Lonergan Indices* (ed. O'Fallon), I may add.

⁴ See for example his expectation that readers will work on the context of his note 10.

⁵ Cf. the mention of "invitatory eclecticism" in "General Method,"

can recognise what may be his best role over the years. As he says (he is thinking of Lonergan): “a poise of such sophisticated direct speech needs slow incarnation (14, n.8).” His question in a 1995 article⁶ is delightfully pertinent here, because the point is the same in both writings: the need and cost of self-appropriation, the low probability of its occurrence.

“You had... a spare hour to check out this McShane article, not envisaging the need for a spare month. ... [L]ater, then, in summer leisure?”

b) about Lonergan ...

It is a pleasure also to follow the lead of the article’s references to Lonergan. In familiar passages, the context of each reference gives fresh understanding. Other passages, forgotten or overlooked, become discoveries. Outstanding for me was the trail to Lonergan’s comment on Aristotle’s “live in accordance with the best in us.”⁷

It is important information that Lonergan “had not backed down on the drive through the book [*Insight*] to the existence of God” (16, n.16). Surely most long-time Lonergan readers have met annoyed opposition to Chapter XIX on the part of some important personage.⁸

Many remember the exchange during the 1970 Congress about Scheler and feelings which McShane recalls (21, n.32). Lonergan’s answer has a different resonance in post-*Method in Theology* days: it personalises but also limits the so-called shift to feelings and values.

Professor McShane encourages us to focus newly on Lonergan’s “practical concerns” (14). He means to include a serious ethics and for that he offers a guide for implementation, namely, that it be “an operation of the [functional] specialities *dialectic* and *foundations*” (15, n.10, emphasis added). As he quickly clarifies, he does *not* mean a focus on commonsense – that, he says (23), can be “unaesthetic,” “unhomely.” I suggest

MJLS 13.1 (Spring 1995), 50, note 51. He uses “nudges” in note 3 of the same article.

⁶ “General Method,” 46.

⁷ *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 7, 1177b. See 3 *Coll*, 27-28.

⁸ In my case, Charles Davis.

that the recent preoccupation among Lonerganians with commonsense arises from something like the attitudes which Professor McShane describes: it has to do with a search for a “broader foundational perspective,” and with that “vaguer view of the human dynamic” which he is recommending as belonging to the bent towards “*making sense*” (16).⁹

With Philip McShane I think again about “patterns” of meaning¹⁰ in Lonergan’s own life, and welcome his phrase “the intellectual pattern of loving” as an apt description of it (22). In micro-chip biographies he refers to what he calls Lonergan’s “poise toward retrieval” (14, n.8) and his “temperament of *oratio obliqua*” (14). Even more interesting are his remark (14) that the *systematic* meaning of what he calls Lonergan’s “*doctrinal*” work *Insight* “of course was private to the forty-year-old Lonergan,” and his linking Lonergan’s familiarity with discernment to both his religious lifestyle and his study (Ignatius and St Thomas [22]).

c) about implementation ...

I had not noticed the inclusion of “implementation” in Lonergan’s definition of metaphysics in *Insight* (15). What is instructive is the emphasis in the article on functional specialization as a *global* need (19).

Even if it is obvious that implementation is the “ongoing crisis” of method, for the author of the article it seems a crisis usually overlooked. Here it is presented in the website context of macrodynamic analysis, with a concern about unfocused research as background.

Professor McShane’s remark that initially the contributions to implementation “are bound to be shabby” (11)

⁹ Also in relation to Lonergan’s “practical concerns”: recall the preoccupation of the 2002 Boston College Lonergan Workshop with moral issues, the sharp call of Charlotte Tansey to Lonergan scholars to attend to such issues (in her address for the Frank Braio program at Fordham University in Spring of 2002), and even the efforts begun just before Lonergan’s death, to show the political consequences of his “positions” (e.g., Frederick Lawrence).

¹⁰ “Patterns” was used in the subtitle of Lonergan’s intellectual autobiography *Caring about Meaning*, ed. P. Lambert, C. Tansey, C. Going (Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1982).

would have a different meaning if we do not think that he includes his own efforts: it would be an instance of “blunt” criticism – such as the one he makes of “comparisons” studiously elaborated without the benefit of basic horizon (31). But if we think he intends to include his own work – and the serious, long-term, work of others – then the point is rather to give a glimpse of the distance yet to be travelled, and the magnitude of the civilizational impact expected eventually from “implementation.”

A new notion for me was that of “elevations,” the elevations needed prior to implementation. For example, he speaks of the lifting of *Insight* into the spiral of functional specialization (14, n.7), of a “classroom lift” (27, n.52), of a “lift” of Lonergan scholarship (30, n.63), of a “lifting of economics to the level of a respectable, adequately normative, empirical science” (20). These phrases sketch for me, in still another way, the scope of the “preliminary work” yet to be done in aid of the reception of Lonergan. “Hodiks,” and related terms offered to our vocabularies, suggest elevations also (29, n.60).

The author’s uses of “detachment” – “oriental detachment” as a strategy within undifferentiated wisdom; the “astonishing naïve detachment” of Aquinas and of Lonergan (13-14) – suggest a new guiding theme for doing intellectual history.

Thinking of the functional specialties as genera of implementation (of transcendental method), Professor McShane locates his present paper in a “ninth genus” of implementation, i.e., not as an exercise of one of the eight functional specialties; it is neither research nor history... nor even communications. Implementation practised in this way, it seems to me from his remark, responds to the “neglected transcendental” ‘Be adventurous,’ by “meshing with a category of fantasy” (cf., 14, n.8).

Conclusion

I wanted to know, in studying Philip McShane’s article, whether it contains a contribution to a better formulation of the role of intelligence in human living than do those accounts of

intelligence – especially in religious literature – which lure partisans of “the heart” into speaking of “mere intelligence.” The author has given many elements of an answer to my wish: the discussion (referred to above) of the “full life of theory”; understanding spoken of as the control of meaning available to a differentiated consciousness (31); “systematics: a language of the heart” (18, n.24); “the intellectual pattern of loving” (22); “full heuristic adequacy” (32, n.66); and, not to be overlooked, the two “enrichments”: Scripture and streetlife (14). His efforts serve as a rebuke if one is engaged in making one’s own anti-intellectual contribution – against the step into theory or, more generally, against other forms of self-transcendence.

Professor McShane may want to know what contribution to contemplative living a reader might find his article to be. My present “comment” is the beginning of my own answer. More specifically: I ask myself whether one can think of “poise”¹¹ as a satisfactory characterisation of the contemplative attitude and I begin to work out the possible correspondences: in a transition to homeliness, a creative minority, a differentiation of consciousness, a struggle for “poisitional conversation” in a contemplative life lived communally (a struggle that was neither Jesus’ nor Lonergan’s, he says – for different reasons). The possible links would have to be checked out in *Shaping of the Foundations*, and in *The Redress of Poise*, and in “General Method,” and in.... and in....

It is clear to me, in concluding this note, that the author and I meet at two points which are very important to each of us.

We meet in an image. No, not the butterfly; the “Singer.”

His “Singer” emerges from Hesse, mine from Hesiod via what he calls “the sad little last book of Eric Voegelin.”¹² I have taken a turn at suggesting “singer at the heart of the universe” as a satisfactory variant among images of the life of

¹¹ See the references to “poise” in “Implementation” and in “General Method,” 47-48, 52.

¹² See “General Method,” 36. My own reference is to vol. V of Voegelin’s *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1987), 85-86.

cloistered nuns,¹³ since this one includes remembering, reflective distance, full corporeality, and the image-ing of God.

We meet in a goal: to shift the probability-schedules of hope (15).¹⁴

To me this seems to express a lifelong purpose of Philip McShane.

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¹³ The best-known is Thérèse's "At the heart of the church I will be love." But see: "Contemplative life in the church today: one nun's opinion," in *Sisters Today* 62 (July 4, 1990): 243-247.

¹⁴ See "In love with the universe: a brief introduction to the work of Bernard Lonergan" in *Dominican Monastic Search* 97: especially 69-74 (also on Washington Lonergan website).