

**HERE COMES EVERYBODY
A Wake for Phil-again**

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In my final year of undergraduate philosophy studies at University College Dublin in 1963, I'd been working on *Insight* on my own—a former Jesuit seminarian had told me about it after Lonergan visited Dublin in 1962. Naturally, when sent to study theology at the Lateran University in Rome, I made it my business to work on Lonergan's three Latin texts, just out in their final 1964 editions. After ordination in Rome in 1967, my first position was a postgraduate tutor in UCD's Department of Logic & Psychology, which involved working on an MA thesis. Unsure of what to work on, I contacted what became the Lonergan Centre at the Jesuit Milltown Institute.

My first meeting with Phil—possibly encouraged by my students at the time, Joe McCarroll and David Walsh—was when he called me into his room at Milltown. When I asked what he was doing, he generously tore out for me a chapter of his typescript for what would become *Randomness, Statistics and Emergence*. I started attending Phil's regular seminars at Milltown for up to 50 people like me, mostly postgrads, with some beginning their careers as university lecturers.

Those sessions were lessons in how to read *Insight*. I'm sure others will remember a comment Phil would make every now and then: that *Insight* had to be expanded not summarized. And the detailed reading he'd give, line by line, was a lesson in textual attention aimed at forcing us to get back inside Lonergan's own mind as he wrote it.

I tried out Phil's way of getting us to appreciate the dynamic interaction between the various levels of reality. This was to expand Aristotle's hylemorphism to "aggreformism," which he summarized by noting the various levels of a human—physical, chemical, biological, zoological, intellectual and religious as $f(p, c, b, z, u, r)$.¹ That helped me see the various psychologies in terms of specific differentiations of the various levels of the human person, with theories of personality as attempts at an integral psychology. Combined with an outline of Lonergan's work in progress on *Method in Theology*—brought back in

¹ Adapted from memory, later published in Philip McShane, *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations* (1st ed.), 106.

1968 from Boston by one of Phil's Jesuit confrères, Conn O'Donovan—Phil gave me all I needed to formulate my thesis, 'Aspects of Method in Human Psychology,' applying classical, statistical, and genetic or developmental method, especially to Jean Piaget's work in child cognition.

In 1969 I left for the Research Center for Motivation and Time-Perspective in Leuven. During my time there, I came back for what was a huge win for Phil, a two-week seminar on the forthcoming *Method in Theology* in 1971 led by Lonergan himself. I still remember Lonergan saying he couldn't put into *Method in Theology* what was the most important thing, namely conversion—we had to bring our own intellectual, moral, and religious conversion into whatever we were doing. This had been Phil's (and of course Fred Crowe's in *The Lonergan Enterprise*) theme song all along.

Whenever in the 1970s and 1980s Phil came back to Milltown, he'd bring us up to date with whatever he was currently working on. One memorable evening at my flat in County Dublin he sang some of the devotional hymns of his childhood, like "Sweet Heart of Jesus." He obviously believed—as Voegelin puts it—that reliving the experience evokes, "and through evocation reconstitute[s], the engendering reality in the listener or reader."²

I'll jump ahead to my writing of *From Big Bang to Big Mystery: Human Origins in the Light of Creation and Evolution* (2011), because writing this memoir showed me how Phil's thought had stayed with me. Once in conversation in the 1980s, in my mathematically and scientifically challenged effort at grasping emergent probability as a framework for articulating evolution, I asked Phil to give me a 'simple' example. Immediately he said "insight into phantasm" was the key instance of emergence. This helped me in my attempt to explain evolution to my readers, along with Phil's sharp articulation of the difference between, say botanical reality and the biological, chemical, and physical levels underlying it:

A simple example for the need to move from a lower to a higher viewpoint would be trying to arrive at a scientific understanding of a field of buttercups. Let's say the buttercups show slight species variation depending on their position in wetter or drier parts of the field. However exhaustively the

² Eric Voegelin, "Immortality: Experience and Symbol," in Ellis Sandoz (ed.), *Published Essays, 1966–1985* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990) 53.

biochemical changes in the buttercups were registered, no such account would yield the specifically botanical insight into the kind of things buttercups are.³

Phil had repeatedly pointed out the limitations of mathematical methodology even in biology—which upends any determinist reading of emergent probability from below upwards: “Realistic mathematical representations of a living organism should place structure in a central role, and should allow for the indifference of the organism to exact numerical values.”⁴

Let me go back to me beginning my PhD in Leuven, ‘Wewards: Theoretical Foundations for a Psychology of Friendship’—surely an over-ambitious effort to do what I later said in the abstract (drawing on Phil, who’d quoted Lonergan’s approach to his work in the economics of circulation analysis):

[‘Wewards’] aims at being as pertinent and as indifferent to the data of human friendship as the science of mathematics is to quantitative phenomena, through the formulation of an integral heuristic structure capable of initiating an empirical investigation of the potential totality of human friendships and their vicissitudes. The ‘for’ in the title of the thesis means that the theory is only part of a complete psychology, theoretical and experimental, and its formulation is proposed as a contribution to the development of a fully-fledged psychology of friendship, through providing the experimental psychologist with an investigatory tool for framing and verifying specific hypotheses. The theory is elaborated in terms of four methods, each of which seeks to determine a range of basic terms, their functional correlation and their unifying principle. These methods articulate personal and interpersonal structure, development, breakdown and recovery, and are named the methods of agonistic structure, deepening agonistic structure, antagonistic destructure and protagonistic restructure respectively. Taken together they form an integral heuristic structure as a structural/ genetic/ diagnostic/ therapeutic theory of friendship, growing friendship, enmity and reconciliation.⁵

But while I’d somewhat sharpened my methodological toolbox, I just couldn’t figure out how to start. Again Phil came to the rescue. In a long essay on just what I needed to hear, he’d written about what he called

³ Quoted in my *From Big Bang to Big Mystery: Human Origins in the light of Creation and Evolution* (Dublin: Veritas, 2011) 97. See McShane, *Randomness, Statistics and Emergence* (1st ed.) 71–76.

⁴ McShane, *Plants and Pianos: Two Essays in Advanced Methodology*, 32.

⁵ See McShane, *Lonergan’s Challenge to the University and the Economy*, 101ff.

“subject-centred explanatorily-heuristic terms.”⁶ To develop such terms, I’d have to use words that first worked for me, and then hope to communicate my effort at understanding personal and co-personal existence in a way that could enter into others’ self-interpretation as individuals, and into their We-interpretation as a community. For this task I’d need a language both culturally intelligible and firmly in the theoretical context I was trying to formulate.

To give an idea of the kind of ‘subject-centred explanatorily-heuristic terms,’ here’s a partial framework of what I was at in ‘Wewards,’ where each category was exemplified at an emotional, intellectual, volitional and spiritual level:

[1] Agonistic Structure of our We-relationships

1. Giving
2. Receiving
3. Uniting

[2] Deepening Agonistic Structure of our We-relationships

1. Giving more
2. Receiving more
3. Uniting more

How that deepening occurs in two virtuous circles of human relational time, as *creative reliving*:

Reliving the past

Teaching
Learning
Identifying with

Creating the future

Creating
Welcoming
Assimilating

[3] Antagonistic Destructure of our We into unWe

1. Dominating
2. Being dominated
4. Alienating

How that destructure occurs in two vicious circles of human anti-relational time as *destructive amnesia*:

⁶ Philip McShane, “Instrumental Acts of Meaning and the Fourth Functional Specialization.” Unpublished typescript (1975), 21.

Forgetting the past

Stupefying
 Being stupefied
 Scandalizing

Destroying the future

Vandalizing
 Resenting
 Deadlocking

[4] Protagonistic Structure of our We

1. Forgiving
2. Being forgiven
3. Reconciling

It's no surprise my approach didn't fit in with my Leuven supervisor's rather behavioristic and mathematized approach to psychology, but I was too long in the tooth to be too worried about that. By then my external examiner at UCD, professor of psychology at Queen's University of Belfast, was kind enough to let my thesis pass the winning post. It was a validation of Phil's earlier insistence that the higher levels of existence integrate the lower rather than experimental psychology's methodological insistence on the reverse. Eric Voegelin would agree on this scientific primacy, where human matters must be understood from the top downwards—as when discussing 'Hitler and Women' he writes: "As a methodological principle let me say that there are indeed causations that lead from sexual life into the spiritual structures, but that man still always remains organized from the spiritual structure down and that it is much more rewarding to interpret the sexual life in terms of the spiritual structure than the reverse."⁷

But the most important thing I learned from Phil, which I've always had to struggle to keep in focus, is his focus on the persons underlying all human relationships, what he focused on as a philosopher and as a person. It's something he touches on in his earliest published book:

In his commentary on the phrase '*Abyssus abyssum invocat*' in psalm 41, Augustine wrote,

If by 'abyss' we understand a great depth, is not man's heart an abyss?
 For what is there more profound than that abyss? Men may speak, may
 be seen ... may be heard speaking: but whose thought is penetrated,

⁷ Eric Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, Detlev Clemens and Brendan Purcell (trans. and eds.) (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1999) 129.

whose heart is seen into? ... Do you not believe that there is in man a deep so profound as to be hidden to him in whom it is?⁸

And elsewhere Phil uses a quote from G. K. Chesterton to try to catch that hidden depth of the elusively unsayable and uncategorizable ‘I’ and ‘We’ at the heart of every relationship:

I have said that St. Francis deliberately did not see the wood for the trees. It is even more true that he deliberately did not see the mob for the men. What distinguishes this very genuine democrat from any mere demagogue is that he never either deceived or was deceived by the illusion of mass-suggestion. Whatever his taste in monsters, he never saw before him a many-headed beast. He saw only the image of God multiplied but not monotonous. To him a man was always a man and did not disappear in a dense crowd any more than in a desert. He honoured all men; that is, he not only loved but respected them all. What gave him his extraordinary personal power was this: that from the pope to the beggar, from the sultan of Syria in his pavilion to the ragged robbers crawling out of the wood, there was never a man who looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernard was really interested in him; in his own inner life from the cradle to the grave; that he himself was being valued and taken seriously, and not merely added to the spoils of some social policy or the names in some clerical document.⁹

I’m not canonizing Phil, but in that quote he caught himself, certainly he caught the person I had the immense grace to have ever-intertwining in my intellectual life.

⁸ McShane, *Music That is Soundless* (1st ed.), 38. Augustine is commenting on Psalm 49.

⁹ Quoted in Philip McShane, “God, Man, Mystery” (Dublin: Milltown Institute, 1970) 9.