

Insight & Beyond: Lecture 10, Part I: *Insight*, Chapter 6 §§2.1-2.4: Patterns of Experience

[0:00]

• Introductory remarks: Due to a technical difficulty, the audio for this class, originally given on November 11, 2009, was lost. The presentation you will be watching is a re-recording that was done on January 7, 2010. Unfortunately the students were on break, so Parts I & II are lectures and have no student participation.

[1:08]

- Review: Common Sense as *Intellectual* from previous class.
- *What is “common” in common sense?*
 - Common sense is an *inventory of shared insights accumulated in a culture*.
 - As such, common sense is communal, the inventory is a community’s possession.
 - Common sense accumulates that inventory by a self-correcting cycle of learning: experience/questions/insights/actions/new experiences.
 - Common sense accumulates through the sharing of others in the community who have already accumulated many of those insights. They share insights indirectly by throwing out images (*phantasms*) with the intention of allowing insights to emerge in others in the community.
 - “The only interpreter of commonsense utterances is common sense.”
 - It restricts further questions to the immediate practical level (in contrast to explanatory understanding).
 - The meaning of “particular” in the phrase “concrete and particular” vs. in the empirical residue.

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• Common sense is intrinsically incomplete and reverts to a normal state of incompleteness when a problem has been addressed. It cannot master all the irregularity of human reality.

[13:35]

• Common sense is not only intellectual: It also comprises shared inventories of judgments of fact, judgments of value, shared feelings, shared stories, symbols, and beliefs.

[18:54]

- Patterning of Experience in Relation to Self-Identity
- What constitutes us; what changes us?
- Insights of self-constitution are essential to our sense of identity, especially in the dramatic pattern of experience.
- For Lonergan (influenced by Aristotle and Aquinas), insights, understanding emerges from *phantasms* – i.e., sensations and images (not from *concepts*).
- Which sensations and images (or ‘phantasms’) are available to us depends upon how we pattern our experience.
- Thus who we are, what we make of ourselves – our *praxis* or human self-making – depends upon how we pattern our experience.

[24:25]

- Patterns of Experience
- Lonergan’s “definition” of the phrase “pattern of experience” is in need of clarification.
- Patterning of experience means how the components of our experiencing are related to each other.
- The ‘Abstractness’ of Sensations: a sensation is never occurs in isolation, but is always already

situated in a context, in a flow composed of other experiences as well.

- What distinguishes the pattern of one person from that of another is the differences among their interests and concerns, which govern their patternings of experience.
- Interests and concerns, then, provide the basic answer to the question, “Why is this set of experiences in this arrangement (pattern) occurring in this person’s flow of consciousness?”
- That is, when Lonergan says that a pattern of experienced “as conceived, is the formulation of an insight,” he means the formulation of an insight into an individual’s interests and concerns as determining the composition of the flow of their experiencing.
- Lonergan resembles Heidegger insofar as he views *perceiving* as situated in a more fundamental context of human concerns.
- Sensation is always in relation to associations, anticipations and concrete concerns.

[32:03]

- Pattern of Experience and Neural Demand Function.
- Many kinds of concerns or “horizons” that structure the dynamic patterns of experience.
- Among these interests and concerns is the spirit of inquiry, which itself can effect the patterning of experiencing.
- The interests and concerns, and their patterning of our experiencing, is *prior* to our acts of understanding (i.e., prior to our insights).
- “Neural demand function”: consciousness selects from the various potential experiences latent in our neurophysiology, selects from among the various demands upon our consciousness for representation that are made by those components in our neurophysiology.
- Lonergan identifies 7 various patterns of experience in *Insight*: the biological, aesthetic, artistic, intellectual, dramatic patterns, as well as the practical & mystical ones.
- The present class focuses only on the biological, intellectual, and dramatic (or “interpersonal”) patterns. Others are treated elsewhere.

[38:45]

- Why Chapter Six is structured as it is: The question, “But who are we?” is ultimately answered by the self-constitution that occurs in the dramatic patterning of experience.
- But dramatic patterning draws upon resources found in their more simplified forms in the intellectual, artistic, aesthetic and biological patternings. Hence, those are treated first in order to build up to his account of dramatic patterning.

[41:02]

- The brain is a dynamic ‘non-system’ capable of trillions of nerve impulses per second.
- Therefore this ‘non-system’ forms a coincidental aggregate of impulses open to higher patterning.
- From this vast reservoir of neuro-physiological function, some elements are brought to consciousness, and patterned further.
- Thus we are constantly selecting from this ‘coincidental aggregate’ in ways that serve our interests and concerns.
- Why Lonergan uses the term ‘neural demand function’; illustrations from bodily awareness.

[50:45]

- The Animal Biological Patterning of Experience and its Concerns
- The animal evolutionary advantages over plants: quick responses to outer stimuli, i.e., to biological opportunities and danger.
- Example of predator and prey.
- In the biological pattern, the contents of consciousness are organized by the basic needs of survival:

nutrition, reproduction, self-preservation.

[58:22]

- The Orchid Wasp
- The orchid wasp versus the bee: the co-evolution of certain species of orchids and wasps enabled the orchids to take advantage of the wasps' reproductive concerns in order to promote pollination; *versus* in the case of bees, where plant pollination is facilitated by nutritional patternings of its experiences.
- Environmental stimuli can thus trigger this or that mode of biological patterning.

[1:03:22]

- Biological *Experience* versus Biological *Patterning* of Experiences.
- *All* human sensitive experience is *biological*, but not all *patterning* of experience is biological.
- All sensitive experiencing is rooted in bodily-based neurological functioning – the reservoir of nervous functioning based in our embodiment.
- Biological *originating* of experiences, *versus* biological *patterning* of those experiences.
- Patterning for the sake of biological, evolutionary factors (nutrition, reproduction, self-preservation) versus patterning for other interests and concerns.

[1:07:10]

- The Intellectual Patterning of Experience:
- The Canon of Selection: What criteria determine whether insights qualify as empirically scientific insights?
- Scientific observation is *not* purely passive “seeing what is there to be seen.” Scientific observation is a highly developed, practiced, and specialized *intellectual* patterning of experiences.
- The Subordination of sensing to scientific interests and concerns.
 - Examples: imagination and observation in Barbara McClintock's chromosome research.
 - Kekule's discovery of benzene after dreaming of the circular snake *Ouroboros*.
- Reflective Inquiry, aimed at reaching judgments, is also selective and patterning of experiencing with regard to its concerns.

End of Part I