

## Insight & Beyond: Lecture 9, Part II: *Insight*, Chapter 6 §1, “Common Sense as Intellectual”

[0:00]

- Transition from Science to Common Sense.
- Why Lonergan left the treatment of common sense until later in *Insight*:
  - common sense as a blend of common sense and common *nonsense*: difficulty of dealing with the biases.
- With science there is a certain degree

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- Lonergan making a case that being intelligent in the realm of common sense is consonant with the natural universe.

[4:29]

- Common sense as a different kind of understanding. What *is* common sense?
- Common sense as *intellectual*. An accumulation of a fund of insights.
  - Born into a community with an accumulated fund of insights. Social capital of group.
  - Different common senses; variations in common sense dependent on social group, place, etc.
  - People acquire the accumulated fund of insights of their community and become persons who have common sense
- Two meaning of “experience”: Experience<sub>1</sub> as sense stimulation, and experience<sub>2</sub> as more than mere exposure to sensations from different situations; being experienced<sub>2</sub> as having insights into those sense experiences.
- Lonergan is focusing on this *intellectual component* in common sense.

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- The fact of different common senses raises the question as to how we transform from our own common sense to that of a different community.
- “Common sense is the only interpreter of common sense.” – i.e., by the same basic process of self-transcending self-correcting cycle of learning.
- Just as children learn to transform from their own visual perspective to that of another person by acquiring commonsense insights, so also more generally this is how we move out of our own common sense to understand the common sense of others.

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- What makes common sense intellectual:
  - (1) its tested fund or inventory of insights, often specific to a place or group.
  - (2) its method of a self-correcting process of learning (comparable to the self-correction of science).

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- What differentiates commonsense insights from scientific insights?
- Common sense as a specialization in the concrete and particular.
- “Adds at least on further insight into the situation at hand.”
- Clarification of the meaning of “the particular and the concrete.”
- Unlike science, not concerned with general rules; and especially since there are no rules as to when to apply the general rules. Application to the particular and concrete is common sense intelligence.

- If common sense does not operate according to rules, what does it operate according to?
- Operates according to the more primordial normativity of inquiry.
- If common sense is not rule-based, seems it would be chaos; but inquiry more basic than rules.

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- Student question about difference between common sense that applies, and common sense into the concrete – no fundamental difference.
  - Not choice of either common sense or science, but of both in their own proper spheres.
- Grasping relatedness, uniqueness.

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- If particularity has to do with the empirical residue, how can common sense be a matter of getting insights into the particular?
- What made the insights in the assigned papers be “particular”?
- Here ‘particular’ means something different from its meaning in association with empirical residue. Its meaning is clarified by its association with ‘concrete.’
- ‘Concrete’ means to grow together. What’s concrete is the complexity of multiple intelligibilities that have grown together.
- Common sense language usage as addressing particular individuals in concrete situations made up of complex intelligibilities.
- Relying, therefore, on a collection of insights that can be used in concrete situation, but only by adding additional insights of how to use that collection to comprehend the complex intelligibility of the concrete situation.

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- Startling realization that ultimately common sense must rely upon the guidance of intelligent inquiry.
- Being wise as self-appropriation. Accepting and trusting the lead of your own intelligent inquiry.

[28:04]

- Student question about relation to Aristotle’s ethics.
  - Aristotle gives a frustratingly incomplete account of *phronesis*.
  - Lonergan is more specific in giving an account of common sense as intellectual (part of what is meant by *phronesis*) as the accumulation of insights, and inquiry, the desire to know, as the standard.
  - In Chapter 18 of *Insight*, Lonergan gives an expanded account of practical insight into a course of action, and its place in ethics.
  - In Chapter 6, however, Lonergan has not yet cleanly distinguished between practical insights as *poesis* (making something different from oneself) and as *praxis* (self-constituting)
- Student remark about whether ethics transcends common sense.

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- Student question about relation of theory and common sense.
- Theory, science, explanation, are not dealing with the concrete and particular.
- Lonergan’s thoughts about political theory are rudimentary and scattered throughout the book.
- In his view, much of what is called political theory is a mixture of common sense and theory in his sense.
- There are times when it is essential to distinguish between explanatory/invariant dimensions of human political behavior and the more culturally specific, commonsense aspects.
- Hobbes presents himself as giving a political theory; but in fact he is giving an account that is

very much drawing upon the concrete circumstances of his times.

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- Student question: are there other forms of intelligence lie between common sense and explanatory, scientific knowing?
- For Lonergan there are many distinct forms of knowing; they are not along a spectrum or derived from either science or common sense.

[38:07]

- What allows common sense to be concrete?
- Questioning as such can go on forever, without ever coming to practical closure.
- Common sense can be particular and concrete because its questioning is restricted by our immediate concerns and interests.

[40:38]

- Student question of whether there are certain commonsense insights that are found in all cultures – formally the same insight, although different in specifics.
- The only interpreter of common sense is common sense. Which means that the answer to this is very specific.

End of Part II.