

BEYOND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

I return now to the problem that concluded the fourth of the series of essays on interpretation. The previous two essays contribute to seeing it as a central problem and as a problem that throws a suspicion on the adequacy of our reading of *Insight* since the book emerged sixty years ago.¹ But that suspicion should be positive in that it pivots on glimpsing that the book ranges way beyond the competence of present philosophy and theology.² That “way beyond” is hard to grasp without breaking forward to some serious light on the problem solved by Lonergan’s canons of hermeneutics.³ Without breaking forward, then, on the meaning of the phrase in *Insight* that ended the fourth essay:

“analogous to common sense there is a historical sense.”⁴

It sits there, and here now, isolated thus as an encouragement to read it freshly, an encouragement backed by the previous two essays. Am I to go on with such encouragement, or should I not now wait and see? The latter seems the best course of action.

But still, some few are puzzling: what does the shift involve?

I suppose the best way to arrive at a view it is to muse over the problem of the other end of the analogy: how are we asked in *Insight* to supplement common sense? That question would have us trekking through the whole of *Insight*, and, from my somewhat developed point of view—after 60 years still shabby—the trekking, to be seriously profitable, would be a slow contemplative trek.⁵ I have written about that difficult psychic shift increasingly in the

¹ *Divyadaan: A Journal of Education and Philosophy*, (28) 2017, volumes 1 and 2 are dedicated to that commemoration. The second volume, focusing on functional collaboration, provides a context for our efforts.

² My essay in volume 1 of *Divyadaan* (28) 2017, “*Insight* and the Trivialization of History,” deals with that neglected ranging.

³ Yet the difficulty is posed, as I have been stressing for some time, right at the start of *Method in Theology*. The Lonergan community block off the difficulty raised there, on the turn of the first page.

⁴ *Insight*, 587.

⁵ The key point I have been making, especially in the series of essays with title “The Interior Lighthouse,” is that we need to move towards a contemplative stance with regard to the pointers of *Insight*.

past decade.⁶ The whole business is very discouraging. To the few who have corresponded with me I would suggest that we start with a reading of the first three canons of hermeneutics: you'll see that it pushes us back towards getting to grips with the universal viewpoint, a topic—you have noticed—that I have been avoiding. We can keep dodging the depth of the topic for the moment by focusing on the practicalities of those canons.

The depth of the topic is the crisis, and the fact that we don't have the analogue in any serious control. Two ways of sniffing that out might be worth pausing over: [1] the end remark of chapter seven of *Insight*;⁷ [2] the terrible challenge of *Insight* 15.7 of even envisaging the study of a growing flower.⁸ But perhaps leave these discouragements aside. Let us see how tricky it is going to be to make a simple commonsense histosense start.

So, yes, read and muse over the first three canons: spread out your interest as wide as your time and energy.⁹ But my beginning suggestion asks that you pause over line 5 of *Insight* 611: “. . . a contributor fails to present his results in terms of the . . .” The? Think of the usual comparative presentation. “Lonergan and Kierkegaard” has been a recent topic at different conferences and in different journals. The results are nowhere presented in terms of a genetic sequencing. Perhaps you cannot even imagine what is missing or how to correct it? Find one of those papers: perhaps it is your own, and self-criticism is the name of the game. But then isn't self-criticism the name of our present game? A start for us is to sniff out the flaw in “Lonergan and Jones,” “Bonnie and Clyde”; or just “Lonergan on Clyde” or “Bonnie on Bernard”?

I see little point in me enlarging on the character of genetic sequencing further here. Might we begin to reach for it, even just leaning on a vague historical sense, seeking to arrive at some notion of how to locate any interpretative investigation in such a context, thus humbly seeding the new science of interpretation? Try for a grip on the difference between

⁶ Perhaps it is good to refer to a dense little indication of the core of this, a neurochemical block, a scotosis: see [Humus 2](#): “Vis Cogitativa: Contemporary Defective Patterns of Anticipation.”

⁷ “May we note before concluding that, while common sense relates things to us, our account of common sense relates it to its neural basis and relates aggregates and successions of instances of common sense to one another.” *Insight*, 269.

⁸ *Insight*, 489 ff.

⁹ You would find it interesting to add the context of the final two chapters of [Christ in History](#): chapter 9, “Interpretation,” and chapter 10, “Reinventing History.”

handling Clyde in the usual way, and getting Clyde into a reasonably sound place in an acceptable sequence of placings.¹⁰ It would be nice if you would share your effort by sending it on to me for inclusion in, say, an upcoming *Interpretation* essay. If the communal effort shaped up we could move forward to some type of forum.

¹⁰ Read again now the extract at note 7 above. Does it not give you a decent nudge?