

Chapter 6: Common Sense  
Section 2 The Subjective Field of Common Sense

Notes by Dr. David Fleischacker

Since common sense is based upon knowledge that regards things in relation to us, it is import to examine the “us” to which things are related. Furthermore, this “us” changes when we come to know things. Hence, knowledge is not merely cognitive, but also constitute. (Later in life, Lonergan expands on these subjective functions of knowing to a more comprehensive theory of the functions of meaning. In Method in Theology, chapter 3, he makes a fourfold distinction regarding the functions of meaning: cognitive, constitutive, communicative, and effective, as well as a fifth, called instrumental).

In Chapter 6, Lonergan is going to examine this “us” or the “subjective side” of common sense knowing by examining patterns of experience.

### 2.1 What are “Patterns of Experience”?

Experience is not merely sensing, but rather, it is organized by a “direction, striving, effort.” Lonergan then presents a few variations of this “direction, striving, effort” that organizes the experience. In order for us to grasp these patterns, we need to attend to our own elements of experience and the patterns. Lonergan will focus our attention to these elements in each section. As with all insights, the insights are into either data of sense or data of consciousness. In this chapter, the focus will be into the data of consciousness (the focus will be upon conscious acts as conscious, not the content of these conscious acts).

Insight: Patterns types of experiences

Data: Elements of Experience = data of consciousness

### 2.2 The Biological Pattern of Experience.

The elements to which Lonergan points include sensations, memories, images, conations, emotions, and bodily movements (as conscious acts, not the contents of these conscious acts). In the biological pattern, these elements are “patterned” by maintaining and fulfilling biological needs. Many of these biological facets go unnoticed (eg. Bio-physiology of the vascular system, etc..). Only some of these facets break into conscious experience, and they do so “intermittently.” When? “...occasionally to meet problems of malfunctioning, but regularly to deal rapidly, effectively, and economically with the external situations in which sustenance is to be won and into which offspring are to be born.” These responses to eternal situations are commonly in terms of pleasure or pain, though one could nuance this by expanding on the passions. The primordial passion is a basic attraction to some good that brings pleasure, the presence of which stirs joy, the absence of which stirs longing and pain, and the loss of which stirs fear, sorrow, anger.

Since the focus of this pattern is upon the “external situation,” the “basic characteristic” is “extroversion.” And the focus of this “extroversion” is to sustain one’s existence and to perpetuate one’s species.

Hence, the biological pattern of experience is “partial, intermittent, and extroverted.”

Descriptively, this extroverted characteristic is at the basis of the “confrontational” view of consciousness, which regards a basic stimulating object to which responds a stimulated subject. This will become important later when Lonergan is giving an account of various philosophies that will take a different position than him on the meaning of truth and of value.

### 2.3 The Aesthetic Pattern of Experience

This pattern starts with creative play and creative elemental realization of intelligence, rationality, volition, and the entire capacity to self-transcend in experience. Its first stage forms a basic aesthetic pattern of experience, its second is an artistic creation and manifestation of the first stage.

Basic aesthetic pattern of experience: There is an enjoyment of simply being conscious in our seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling, moving – one sees this in higher animals and in human beings. In human beings however, this flowers forth into higher acts of conscious living, into understanding, knowledge, value, and freedom, or in short, to a creative upward movement of the capacity for self-transcendence (the phrase “capacity for self-transcendence” is Lonergan’s formulation later in life of the essential potentiality of human existence). This can be found in the love children have for games and the passion adults have for sports and for creative conversations, humor, and the drama of intersubjectivity.

Artistic pattern of experience: Beyond the mere joy of experiencing the pleasant, one also can creatively construct expressions of creative aesthetic existence. Just as mathematics plays with the empirical residue to form correlations and statistical ideals, so the artist can play with aesthetic experiences to form aesthetic patterns manifested in works of arts. As a note, Lonergan gives greater attention to this in his chapter on meaning in Method in Theology. In Method, he mentions that the artist will not simply recreate an experience, but will pull put together an artistic manifestation of his or her insights into that experience. It will be an “idealization” of that experience, in order to draw others to enter into this experience. We will look at this in more detail once Lonergan develops his theory of meaning later in Insight. These sensory manifestations of creative constructions of both data of sense and data of consciousness (hence creative insights into insights, judgements, decisions – think of literary plots and characters for example).

### 2.4 The Intellectual Pattern of Experience

Math and Science (and one can add philosophy as well) involve a pattern of experience that liberates one into the discovery of correlations, statistical ideals, and emergent probabilities of systems and higher systems. The book Insight itself presupposes that one is willing to enter into the intellectual pattern. It requires that one's imagination be formed to participate in seeking clues, in forming intelligible patterns, in verification of insights, and in imaginative syntheses which can lead to further experiments and explorations, new insights, and new syntheses. In other words, the imagination comes to be formed in a way that participates in the classical and statistical heuristic structures, and then methodologically in the canons of empirical science.

When one first attempts to enter the intellectual pattern, it can be extremely difficult to do, especially if one has largely lived in the biological and dramatic patterns. Lonergan does note that the aesthetic and artistic patterns help to liberate the imagination from the merely biological (and one might add from the dramatic as well) so as to allow for a free creative use of the imagination and the potentiality of the universe, both human and non-human. This in turn can help to open doors to the intellectual pattern. "Can" is the operative word. One might enjoy the aesthetic and never enter the artistic, nor the intellectual. However, the leap from the biological to the intellectual pattern of experience is greater than the leap from the artistic to the intellectual, and I think this is the point Lonergan is making.

## 2.5 The Dramatic Pattern of Experience

The focal point here is human living. Human living is not merely biological. Rather, all that we do, even if it has a biological purpose, is then elevated to manifest our humanity. We do not just eat, but we eat within the context of customs for preparing food, for sitting at the table, for styles of plates and utensils and how to use these, manners of politeness during the course of the meal, acceptable types of conversations. Likewise for our clothing, our housing, our gardens, our manners of conversational talk and mutual collaboration on various projects. This dramatic humanization of living pre-dates the artistic. Lonergan writes, "the fair, the beautiful, the admirable is embodied in man in his own body and actions before it is given a still freer realization in painting and sculpture, in music and poetry."

Contrasting the dramatic with the artistic helps to clarify both. The artistic pattern allows for a greater free play with embodied meaning than does the dramatic pattern. Human beings have to live, they have to be attentive to biological necessities and social needs, hence these provide a kind of limit within which the dramatic operates. Yet, the dramatic is a manifestation of this creative eros in the human subject which calls for a human transformation of the dramatic and social necessities of human living. Thus, it is rooted in the same spirit that animates the aesthetic and artistic patterns.

This dramatic element is why people are always revolted by mere animality and mere pragmatism in society and industry. We are more, and we want that to be lived and manifested in everything we do. And though it varies in "locality, period, and social

milieu," it always manifests this same liberty found in the human soul and its wonder for intelligibility, truth, and beauty.

One further difference from the artistic pattern is that the dramatic does not start with materials and creatively construct a pattern. Rather, the materials already emerge within a pattern that has been formed throughout one's own biography, in relationship to others. One starts in the family and joins a civilization. In this interplay of the self and the social, one creatively responds, and thus is formed in relation to others. Thus, the materials are already oriented by habits and customs, imbued with emotion and conation. It is one's own embodied experience that is the pattern being formed by the dramatic subject, and this experience is much more personal, more immediate, more important than any other work of art.

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