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edited by

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the coherence of propositions, the rigor of inferences. But it does involve a shift in the significance of logic. For Aristotle in his *Posterior Analytics* made his demonstrative syllogism the central piece in his construction both of the nature of science and of the relations between sciences. That construction has turned out to be a procrustean bed on which science cannot lie. So far from providing the key to the whole nature of science, logic has to be content with the task of promoting clarity, coherence, and rigor in the formulation and application of hypotheses and theories. Further, while it is essential that this task be properly performed, still the significance of that performance is measured not by logic itself but by method. For an empirical science is not confined to logical operations with respect to terms, propositions, inferences. It includes observation, description, the formulation of problems, discovery, processes of experimentation, verification, revision. Within that larger whole logic ensures the clarity of terms, the coherence of propositions, the rigor of inferences. And the more successfully it performs that task, the more readily will there come to light not the definitive immutability but the defects of current views and the need to seek more probable opinions.¹⁷

5 Generalized Empirical Method

We were dissatisfied with mere inner conviction, and so we asked whether it bore any relation to objective truth. We have been pondering successive stages in the liquidation of the brave view presented in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. We have come up with a science that yields, not objective truth, but the best available opinion of the day.

But, if science does not give us objective truth, where are we to go? At this point each man has to become his own philosopher, and so I have no more to offer than my own solution to the issue. I have called it a generalized empirical method.¹⁸

Generalized empirical method is a method. It is a normative pattern of related and recurrent operations that yield ongoing and cumulative results. It regards operations, and so it is not just a list of materials to be combined in a cake or a medicine. It regards recurrent operations, and so the same

17 [In 87900DTE070, Lonergan adds, 'What does science give us? The best available current opinion.']

18 Lonergan, *Insight* 243–44, and cf. 72 [CWL 3: 268–69 and cf. 95–96] (see above, p. 24, note 12).

method can be employed over and over again. It yields ongoing and cumulative results, and so it differs from the New Method Laundry, which keeps on repeating the same result whenever it is used. Such cumulative results set a standard, and because the standard is met, the pattern of related operations is normative: it is the right way to do the job.¹⁹

Generalized empirical method envisages all data. The natural sciences confine themselves to the data of sense. Hermeneutic and historical studies turn mainly to data that are expressions of meaning. Clinical psychology finds in meanings the symptoms of conflicts between conscious and preconscious or unconscious activities. Generalized empirical method operates on a combination of both the data of sense and the data of consciousness: it does not treat of objects without taking into account the corresponding operations of the subject; it does not treat of the subject's operations without taking into account the corresponding objects.²⁰

As generalized empirical method generalizes the notion of data to include the data of consciousness, so too it generalizes the notion of method. It wants to go behind the diversity that separates the experimental method of the natural sciences and the quite diverse procedures of hermeneutics and of history. It would discover their common core and thereby prepare the way for their harmonious combination in human studies. From various viewpoints man has been named the logical animal, the symbolic animal, the self-completing animal. But in each of these definitions man is regarded as an animal, and so he is an object for the natural sciences. At the same time, he is regarded as logical or symbolic or self-completing; he lives his life in a world mediated by meaning; and so he is a proper object for hermeneutic and historical studies. What, then, is the common core of related and recurrent operations that may be discerned both in natural science and in human studies?

In the natural sciences the key event is discovery. Whether we recall Archimedes' *Eureka* or the legend of Newton associating a falling apple with a falling moon, whether we turn from epoch-making discoveries to the larger field of less surprising but no less essential contributions, we

19 See the first chapter in Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (see above, p. 32, note 29).

20 Distinguish three meanings of the term 'transcendental': the most general and all-pervasive concepts, namely, *ens, unum, verum, bonum*, of the Scholastics; the Kantian conditions of the possibility of knowing an object *a priori*; Husserl's intentionality analysis in which *noesis* and *noema*, act and object, are correlative.

ever find ourselves at the point where natural science has made a quantum leap. Something new has emerged. Again, in hermeneutics the key event is understanding: for the theorist of hermeneutics was Schleiermacher, and he got beyond the various rules of thumb of classical scholars and biblical exegetes by expounding a discipline based on the avoidance of misunderstanding and thereby the avoidance of misinterpretation. In history, again, the key operation is understanding, and so it was that Johann Gustav Droysen extended the procedures of hermeneutics to the whole of history by observing that not only individuals but also families, peoples, states, religions express themselves. Nor is understanding alien to common sense. It is the everyday experience of seeing what you mean, getting the point, catching on, seeing how things hang together. Indeed, when we esteem people for their intelligence, it is because of the ease and frequency with which they understand; and when we suspect that they may be a bit retarded, it is because they understand only rarely and then slowly.

However, understanding is only one of the many components that have to be combined to constitute an instance of human knowledge. It presupposes data, whether given to sense or given in consciousness: for our understanding always is an insight, a grasp of intelligible unity or intelligible relationship; and a grasp of unity presupposes the presentation of what needs unification, as a grasp of intelligible relationship presupposes the presentation of what can be related. Again, such insight or grasp presupposes inquiry: that search, hunt, chase for the way to piece together the merely given into an intelligible unity or innerly related whole. Nor is it enough to discover the solution. One also must express it adequately. Otherwise one will have had the mere experience of the occurrence of a bright idea, but one will not have the power to recall it, use it, apply it. There is a further point to such expression, whether in word or deed. Insights are a dime a dozen. For the most part they occur, not with respect to data in all their complexity, but with respect to merely schematic images. Dozens of such images are needed to approximate to what actually is given, and so it is that the expression of insight has to be followed by a very cool and detached process of reflection that marshals the relevant evidence and submits it to appropriate tests before laying claim to any discovery or invention.

Such in briefest outline is the normative pattern of recurrent and related operations that yield ongoing and cumulative results in natural science, in hermeneutics, in history, in common sense. It will be noted that the operations involved occur consciously: in dreamless sleep one does not experience or inquire or understand or formulate or reflect or check or pass

judgment. Not only are the operations conscious. There also is a dynamism that moves one along from one operation to the next. There is the spontaneity of sense. There is the intelligence with which we inquire in order to understand, and, once we have understood, there is the intelligence with which we formulate what we have grasped. There is the reasonableness with which we reflect on our formulations, check them out, pronounce in the light of the evidence we have brought to light. Such spontaneity, intelligence, reasonableness are themselves conscious. So it is that both the operations and the relations that unite them in a normative pattern are given in consciousness.

But their givenness, of itself, is only infrastructure. It is not yet human knowledge but only one component within an item of knowledge of which the remainder as yet is only potential. To make that remainder actual one has *first* to attend to one's attending, note how spontaneously it fixes upon what gives delight, promises pleasure, threatens danger, recall the long years at school when teachers labored to sublimate our animal spirits and harness them to different, allegedly higher pursuits, so that now without too much pain one can sit through a whole lecture and even listen to most of it. *Secondly*, one has to advert to one's own intelligence, its awareness when one is failing to understand, its dissatisfaction with explanations that do not quite explain, its puzzled search for the further question that would clear the matter up, its joy when a solution comes to light, its care to find the exact expression to convey precisely what understanding has grasped. In brief, attending to one's own intelligence brings to light a primitive and basic meaning of the word 'normative,' for the intelligence in each of us prompts us to seek understanding, to be dissatisfied with a mere glimmer, to keep probing for an even fuller grasp, to pin down in accurate expression just what we so far have attained. In similar fashion, *thirdly*, attending to one's own reasonableness reveals an equally primitive and basic but complementary type of normativeness. Ideas are fine, but no matter how bright, they are not enough. The practical man wants to know whether they will work. The theoretical man will wonder whether they are true: he will test their inner coherence, compare them with what he otherwise considers established, work out their implications, devise experiments to see whether the implications are verifiable, and if no flaw can be found, he will grant, not that they are true, but only that they seem probable. Our reasonableness demands sufficient evidence, marshals and weighs all it can find, is bound to assent when evidence is sufficient, and may not assent when it is insufficient. *Finally*, there is the normativeness of our deliberations.

Between necessity and impossibility lies the realm of freedom and responsibility. Because we are free, we also are responsible, and in our responsibility we may discern another primitive and basic instance of normativeness. It is, so to speak, the reasonableness of action. Just as we cannot be reasonable and pass judgment beyond or against the evidence, so too we cannot be responsible without adverting to what is right and what is wrong, without enjoying the peace of a good conscience when we choose what is right, without suffering the disquiet of an unhappy conscience when we choose what is wrong.

It is time to conclude. We have been asking whether there is any connection between inner conviction and objective truth. By inner conviction we have meant not passion, not stubbornness, not willful blindness, but the very opposite; we have meant the fruit of self-transcendence, of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible; in brief, of being ruled by the inner norms that constitute the exigences for authenticity in the human person. But for objectivity we have distinguished two interpretations. There is the objectivity of the world of immediacy, of the already-out-there-now, of the earth that is firm-set only in the sense that at each moment it has happened to resist my treading feet and bear my weight. But there also is the objectivity of the world mediated by meaning; and that objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity, of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible.

In my opinion, then, inner conviction is the conviction that the norms of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility have been satisfied. And satisfying those norms is the high road to the objectivity to be attained in the world mediated by meaning and motivated by values.