

Tim Lynch's QQ.

1. Philosophy is the love (philia) of wisdom (sophia).
2. Theology is discourse (logos) about God (theos).
3. In philosophy wisdom is a human ideal; in theology wisdom is the self-revealing wisdom that is God.
4. The importance of philosophy is escape from the cave described by Plato in the Republic.

What is that cave?

As children we learn to talk, to use words correctly, to tell the truth and shame the devil. But our ideas of truth are elementary: it is a report about what is really out there now; it is known by taking a good look, by taking a second look, by checking what we say by what we see, etc.

All this ~~omits~~ systematically knowing the truth about oneself, about one's operations, about performing them correctly, about checking the truth of that performance.

5. It is not a new truth but as old as Plato to say the least.

It is the truth that to be consciously and successfully rational we have to undergo an intellectual conversion, to discover that learning to talk coherently and correctly is not to fulfil the ancient precept, gnothi seauton, know yourself, that this knowledge does not emerge automatically, spontaneously, effortlessly, or even from a serious study of logic.

6. It insists not on a new enlightenment but on eliminating the widespread forgetfulness of a very old enlightenment.

7. My work includes only a very few allusions to Hume. I disagree with his sensism of course, but I am really concerned to reject the epistemology he shares with most scholastics, namely, that objective knowledge is a matter of taking a good look.

The difference between them is that while the sensists are content with a sensitive apprehension of what really is out there, the scholastics also want a spiritual look that abstracts from the conditions of matter and apprehends by a look that by its abstractness is spiritual and so knows the universal and makes valid syllogisms in Barbara valid.

While I insist on the central role of insight into phantasm as the intermediary between sense and concepts, they insist on the apprehension spiritually of the universal. For me the universal is attained by disregarding what is irrelevant to the issue in hand.

8 (preamble): "empirically conscious"

Introspection in so far as it merely adverts to what we already are conscious of, is empirical

But conscious acts are of different kinds: sensitive acts ARE EMPIRICALLY conscious, intellectual acts are intelligently conscious, judgments are rationally conscious, decisions are morally or immorally conscious.

8a The ability to ask questions is the ability to be puzzled.

This ability is a priori: it is not an a priori content as in Kantian theory, but an a priori awareness of a lack, an absence, an incompleteness, in one's current operations.

The question itself results from the puzzlement. It consists in formulating just what one does not see, hear, feel, etc., just where one does not catch on, get the point, understand, just in what manner one is unaware of the evidence for an assertion.

The process of questioning keeps on until one is satisfied with the answer reached or, on the other hand, loses interest, gives up, or decides that one's friend seems to have a screw loose somewhere.

Introspection occurs in so far as one endeavors to formulate just what is puzzling one. But being puzzled is neither reflection nor introspection: it is awareness of a cognitional gap.

8b One has no insights without having images in which one grasps the intelligibility that one proceeds to formulate intelligently.

In knowledge of one's cognitional activities, one can have insights only in so far as one provides oneself with appropriate images, symbols, representations in which one grasps what one is trying to understand.

A physicist does not understand his image of an electron, but in the image he can come to grasp what he understands electrons either may be or really are. What goes for electrons also goes for cognitional activities.

8c In the book Insight I offer the reader a series of various insights drawn from maths, physics, common sense, human knowledge.

From spotting the insight in each of such examples the reader accumulates a series of insights into different insights and so can so proceed to an approximate grasp of what kind of thing an insight is.

The study of instances of insight is a study of insight as object but nonetheless it is a study of an object in the subject.

8c It is into insights of the subject but as represented symbolically in the subject's imagination of his own acts.

8d One represents the activities reflected on symbolically

9 It is not principally Hume. The other philosophers with whom I am concerned are scholastics who admit that ens per verum cognoscitur but explain that this verum is known by a true sensitive look plus a true spiritual look.

I consider this just a dodge to cover over their oversight and consequent ignorance of insight, their consequent incomprehension of empirical science whether of material things or of the operations of the human mind, their incomprehension of Marechal's contention that human knowledge is not intuitive but discursive, their disregard of Aquinas' statement which runs approximately:

quando quis aliquid intelligere studet, format sibi quaedam phantasmata in quibus quasi inspicit quod intelligere studet.

QQ from Timothy Lynch [2 10 82]

6. Does your work in your own view provide a basis for a new enlightenment?

I have never thought of it in that manner. My Grace and Freedom and my Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas are detailed historical studies of Aquinas with regular recurrence to his sources in Aristotle and Augustine.

While I have referred more than once to Pao XIII's phrase, vetera novis augere et perficere, my basic concern is with what is not new but simply forgotten for about seven hundred years.

Human intelligence is not a new topic: Plato put questions that called for intelligent answers; Aristotle makes penetrating remarks about the precise functioning of intelligence; Aquinas was at home with Aristotle; but when anciscans began to argue that Aquinas treated Aristotle as though he was a Father of the Church, they raised a question that no one could solve until the development of knowledge of historical knowledge, and that was in the late nineteenth century. So they resorted to argument, to logic, to the art of marking time with no realization that they were getting nowhere. The eclipse of intelligence was the appeal to logic as to an ultimate court. It could end only when deductivism was replaced by empirical scientific method, and the relevant empiricism was attention to the data of one's own conscious intelligence.

I am aware of course that most people have failed to fathom what my Verbum articles are about, or my Insight is about. But the answer is very simple. Try and understand something that, up to now you have not understood. When understanding occurs, you will know by experience what is meant by understanding. And unless understanding occurs in a context that calls your attention to the occurrence, you will never have clear and distinct idea of what it is to understand.

I have been endeavoring to provoke an enlightenment, but it is not new; it has merely been forgotten.

7. I am not aware that I mentioned Hume apart from the passages referred to by Fitzpatrick.

9. Do you primarily think of Hume when in your work you speak of knowing as taking a look?

Not at all. I am thinking almost exclusively of the Scholastics that think of looking as the foundation stone of all epistemological problems. By the "real" they understand "what is already out there now," and that they feel that/they and everyone else knows objectively and knows objective reality.

This viewpoint appears in the the most recondite contexts. If I remember correctly, John of St Thomas interprets Aquinas, not by explaining insight into phantasm, but by telling us without any mention of intelligence or insight, that the agent intellect uses the phantasm to imprint an intelligible species on the possible intellect and the possible intellect sees the species and thereby comes to knowledge of the universal.

8) Preamble. I am empirically conscious of my cognitional operations on their various levels.

Cognitional operations are at one and the same time both intentional (regard objects) and conscious (regard themselves and their operator or subject). Consciousness differs from level to level: sense is empirically conscious; intelligence is intelligently conscious; reflection and judgment are rationally conscious; moral judgment and decision are responsibly conscious.

Introspection is the operation of adverting to the operations of which one already is conscious. If they were not already conscious, there would be no possibility of introspection discovering them.

(8a) Questioning is neither reflection nor introspection. It is the a priori of the human mind. It is the experience of being puzzled. It gives rise to qq in series: questions for intelligence, questions for reflection, questions for responsibility.

This a priori differs radically from Kant's which involved an otherwise unknown content. Being puzzled contains no content; it is an awareness of one's own lack of content and an incipient effort to fill the vacuum.