

Tim Lynch's Questions. Submitted 13.x.82. Received 13.xi.82.

1. Perhaps a main root of your questions is the absence of a clear distinction between two quite different analyses of human cognition.

a) Knowing is a matter of taking a look. *Ens per verum cognoscitur* means that reality is known when what is true is known. But perception (sensible or conscious) is true, objective; otherwise universal skepticism would follow.

b) Knowing is a compound and one must keep in mind the difference between the whole and its parts.

On the former (a) view the perceptions of sense or of consciousness are true objective unquestionable and so epistemologically privileged. Such perceptions of themselves are knowledge of facts.

On the latter view (b) the data of sense and of consciousness of themselves are indistinct undefined. They are not of themselves knowledge but simply elements in a process to which they make a very important contribution. They provide us not with facts but merely with data towards the acts of understanding and the reflection that finds in the combination of data and understanding the virtually unconditioned, the virtually absolute, that takes us out of mere subjectivity into a world of reality fact truth.

To decide between these two positions for the perceptinists is a matter of argument, syllogizing, disputation.

The decision of the critical realists is reached as any scientific conclusion is reached: from the data of experience one goes on to seek understanding; and in the measure one is lucky enough to understand one will find in Insight XI the argument that summarizes the first eleven chapters of the book.

2. Notion is employed in various senses. My technical usage is derived from Aristotle's definition of a nature: a nature is an immanent principle of movement and rest. The special case of such a nature is our spontaneous desire to know implemented by the spontaneity of our questions for understanding, for reflection, for responsibility, for salvation. They are a priori. They arise spontaneously and they keep recurring until a satisfactory answer has been reached. They are not concepts or ideas as Kant's a priori but simply awareness of a gap, of ignorance and an effort to overcome it.

Ideas are the content of acts of insight, the act that grasps intelligible unity or relation in data.

Concepts are heuristic or nominal or explanatory:

heuristic: let  $x$  be the required number, let  $f(x, y) = 0$  be the required function;

nominal: a circle is a perfectly round plane curve

explanatory: a circle is a locus of coplanar points equidistant from a center

3. Those who hold that knowing is a matter of taking a look, eg a look at Lonergan's method.

4. Knowing as knowing (b) does not constitute its object: it affirms it correctly.

Knowing as perception does not account for consciousness; read Hume's objection, Fitzpatrick p 128 f.

5. Potency form and act are constituents of finite beings  
Knowledge of them is constituted by the study of metaphysics.  
The study of metaphysics involves the information of a potency  
by a form or species and the actuation of the form by an act, intelligere.

But the act constitutive of the knowing is particular,  
the act that is known is universal, since any act of understanding  
will do.

What is constituted by knowing is the act of knowing; what  
is known has to be already constituted to be the object of experience,  
understanding, and judgment.

6. "A concept cannot be abstracted from its meaning." How  
could one mean anything and abstract from meaning. What does a concept  
do but be the medium in quo one means?

7. If consciousness is perception, Hume's objection follows  
(cf . 4).

8. Distinguish two components in acts: the intentional  
component, what we intend in questioning; the conscious component,  
our awareness that we are intending, not that statement which  
presupposes consciousness and objectifies it, but what is presupposed.  
That presupposed awareness is constitutive of consciousness  
and the datum for the knowledge we derive from consciousness.

9. One prescind from matters that are irrelevant to the  
question in hand.

People who understand, prescind from the irrelevant.  
People who specialize in the metaphysics of knowledge  
speak of abstracting the form or species from the matter. As they  
commonly prescind from understanding, their idea of a form is apt to  
be quite vague.

10. What do you mean by the "my" when you speak of "my acts."  
The subject is the unity, identity, whole, that is  
conscious of his acts; as conscious of his acts which are in a temporal  
sequence, consciousness is over time.

11. Unus idemque motus est et actio et passio: passio ut in  
patiente; actio ut ab agente.

For Aristotle sensing, understanding, etc., are passive.  
He is quite explicit and so too is Thomas.

The root of the confusion in the matter is that I hear,  
see, understand, are verbs in the active voice. Therefore they  
express not passion but action.

The basis of the Aristotelian position is that its opposite  
implies omne movens movetur.

Cf indices in Grace and Freedom and in Verbum

PS The history of the subject is a maresnest; most people  
have given up on the effort to think things through; that is the  
permanent problem in philosophy.