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6 Interpretation

Today we are speaking on interpretation, and we will begin with some initial clarifications. There is an introductory section, 'Basic Exegetical Operations,' and then three main sections: 'Understanding', 'Judging', 'Stating.' The 'Understanding' falls into four parts: understanding the object, understanding the words, understanding the author, and fourthly, understanding oneself, *Selbstverstehen*; four aspects, then, to the understanding. Secondly, judging the correctness of one's interpretation, followed by a clarification in that connection. And, finally, stating the meaning of the text, the different ways in which that meaning can be stated.

In treating interpretation, then, we are beginning to consider in detail the functional specialties. We are considering interpretation not in any way one might happen to be pleased to think about it, but interpretation as one of the eight functional specialties in theology; consequently, something distinct from systematics, something distinct from communications, and so on.

The area of theological research is the religion on which the theology reflects. The general purpose of the research is fixed by the two phases of theology, namely, to listen to the past, and to speak in the present for the future. Specific purposes come to light within each contemporary ongoing process. The significant theologian is the man that reads aright the signs of the times to carry out the operations that overcome evils and promote the good.

The openness of the foregoing position is to be noted. Theology is conceived not as something intrinsically different from religious studies, but rather as a type of religious

¹ 21 June, part 1; audio can be found at 60100A0E070. Lonergan begins by indicating the topics of the next day's lecture, History.

study that is not content with research, interpretation, and history, but goes on to add dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. Religious studies, generally, are content with research, interpretation, history. Theology adds on five more.

Again, while theology can be content to be simply the theology of a single religious group, the existence of the specialty 'dialectic' enables it to be more comprehensive, to be the theology of a dialectically related set of distinct religious groups.

Moreover, such comprehensiveness need not be restricted, say, to the Christian religions, for it is Christian doctrine that God gives all men sufficient grace for salvation, and so it should seem possible, especially as religious studies advance in penetration and profundity, to find common as well as divergent elements among all the religions of mankind.

The possibility of the foregoing openness and comprehensiveness arises from the transition from the ideals set by deductive logic to the ideals set by method. Religions are empirical facts that offer data for investigation, and method guides the course of the investigation. In contrast, a deductivist approach has to have at the very outset the premises from which all conclusions can be reached; and so, from the outset, there are bound to be as many distinct and irreconcilable sets of premises as there are differing religions and even differing theologies. Therefore the general approach is a complete openness, because of method and because we are going to have a later specialty 'dialectic' in which we begin to choose and select.

Our concern, then, is with interpretation as a functional specialty. It is related to research, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. It depends on them, and they depend on it. Nonetheless, it has its own proper end and its specific mode of operating; it can be treated separately. If you look at the enormous books like Emilio Betti's *Teoria generale della interpretazione*, Milano: Giuffrè, 1955, he considers all sorts of different types of interpretation. Gadamer's *Wahrheit and*

Methode, Tübingen: Mohr, 1960, again, an enormous complexity to the consideration, because he is considering interpretation, and history, and communications, all at once.

I shall follow a common enough terminology and understand by hermeneutics principles of interpretation and by exegesis the application of the principles to a given task. The task to be envisaged will be the interpretation of a text but the presentation will be so general that it can be applied to any exegetical task.

A first observation is that not every text stands in need of exegesis. In general, the more a text is systematic in conception and execution the less does it stand in need of any exegesis. Euclid's *Elements* were composed about twenty-three centuries ago; one has to study to come to understand them; that labor may be greatly reduced by a competent teacher; but while there is a task of coming to understand Euclid, a task that many find very difficult, still, there is no problem, no task of interpreting Euclid. The correct understanding is unique; incorrect understanding can be shown to be mistaken; and so while there have been endless commentators on the clear and simple gospels there exists little or no exegetical literature on Euclid.

So the more a text is systematic in conception and execution, there may be great difficulty in learning what it means but there is no problem of interpretation, of exegesis.

Besides the systematic mode of cognitional operations there is also the commonsense mode. Moreover, there are very many brands of common sense. Common sense is common not to all men of all places and times but to the members of a community successfully in communication with one another. Among them, one's commonsense statements have a perfectly obvious meaning and stand in no need of any exegesis. But statements may be transported to other communities distant in place or in time; horizons, values, interests, intellectual development, experience may differ; expression may have intersubjective, artistic, symbolic components that appear strange; then there arises the question, What is meant by the sentence, the paragraph, the chapter, the book? Many answers seem possible, and none seems quite satisfactory.

Such, in general, is the problem of interpretation. But, at the present time, four factors have combined to heighten it enormously.

The first is the emergence of world consciousness and historical consciousness. We are aware of many very different cultures existing at the present time, and we are aware of the great differences that separate present from past cultures.

The second is the pursuit of the human sciences, in which meaning is a fundamental category and consequently interpretation a fundamental task.

The third is the confusion that reigns in cognitional theory and epistemology. Interpretation is just a particular case of knowing, namely, knowing what is meant. It follows that confusion about knowing leads to confusion about interpreting.

The fourth factor, finally, is modernity. Modern man has been busy creating his modern world, freeing himself from reliance on tradition and authority, working out his own world view and so reinterpreting the views held in the past. So the Greek and Latin classical authors have been removed from the context of Christian humanism and revealed as pagans. The law has been removed from the context of Christian morality and theology, to be placed in the context of some post-Christian philosophy and attitude to life. Even the scriptures have been removed from the context of Christian doctrinal development and restored to the pre-dogmatic context of the history of religions.

So there are four factors increasing the significance of hermeneutics at the present time: the emergence of world and historical consciousness; the pursuit of the human sciences, in which meaning is a fundamental category and, consequently, interpretation a fundamental task; the confusion in philosophy; and, finally, modernity: man's reinterpretation of his past in the light of modern knowledge and achievements.

Embedded, then, in the problem of hermeneutics there are quite different and far profounder problems. They are to be met neither by a wholesale rejection of modernity, nor by a wholesale acceptance of modernity; in my opinion they can be met only by the development and application of theological method. Only in that fashion can one

distinguish, and keep separate, problems of hermeneutics and problems in history, in dialectic, in foundations, in doctrines, in systematics, in communications. In fact, the most striking feature in much contemporary discussion of hermeneutics is that it attempts to treat all these issues as if they were hermeneutical; in our usage of the term, they are not.

1 Basic Exegetical Operations

There are three basic exegetical operations: (1) understanding the text; (2) judging how correct one's understanding of the text is; and (3) stating what one judges to be the correct understanding of the text. Understand, judge, state.

Understanding the text has four main aspects. One understands the object to which the text refers. He is talking about food; one understands food. One understands the words employed in the text, the words that refer to the object. One understands the author that employs the words; thirdly, one understands the author. And, fourthly, one arrives at such understanding through a process of learning and even at times as a result of a conversion. When you have a conversion you have a different self to understand. Needless to say, the four aspects are aspects of a single coming to understand. Further, one may understand the object independently of the text or one may come to understand the object through the text.

To judge the correctness of one's understanding of a text raises the problem of context, of the hermeneutic circle, of the relativity of the totality of relevant data, of the possible relevance of more remote inquiries, of the limitations to be placed on the scope of one's interpretation.

Finally, to state what one judges to be the correct understanding of the text raises the question of the precise task of the exegete, of the categories he is to employ, of the language he is to speak.

2 Understanding the Object

A distinction has to be drawn between the exegete and the student. Both learn, but what they learn is different. The student reads a text to learn about objects that as yet he does not know. He is required to have learnt the meanings of words and to know about similar or analogous objects that he can use as starting points in constructing the objects he is to learn about from the text. On the other hand, the exegete may already know all about the objects treated in a text, yet his whole task remains to be performed; for that task is not to know about objects; it is not to know whether or not the text reveals adequate knowledge of the objects; it is simply to know what happened to be the objects, real or imaginary, intended by the author of the text.

In practice, of course, the foregoing distinction will imply not a rigid separation of the roles of student and of exegete but rather a difference of emphasis. The student also is something of an interpreter of texts, and the exegete also learns from texts something that otherwise he would not know. However, though the distinction in practice is only of emphasis, it remains that our present concern is theory and, indeed, not the general learning theory that regards students but the special learning theory that regards exegesis.

I have said that the whole exegetical task remains to be performed even though the exegete already knows all about the objects treated in a text. I now must add that the more the exegete does know about such objects, the better. For he cannot begin to interpret the text unless he knows the language in which it is written and, if he knows that language, then he also knows the objects to which the words in that language refer. Such knowledge, of course, is general and potential. Reading the text, when its meaning is obvious, makes that general knowledge more particular and that potential knowledge actual. On the other hand, when the meaning of the text is not obvious because of this or that defect, still the greater the exegete's resources, the greater the likelihood that he will

be able to enumerate all possible interpretations and assign to each its proper measure of probability.

The foregoing amounts to a rejection of what may be named the Principle of the Empty Head. According to this principle, if one is not to 'read into' the text what is not there, if one is not to settle in an a priori fashion what the text must mean no matter what it says, if one is not to drag in one's own notions and opinions, then one must just drop all preconceptions of every kind, attend simply to the text, see all that is there and nothing that is not there, let the author speak for himself, let the author interpret himself. In brief, the less one knows, the better an exegete one will be.

These contentions, I should say, are both right and wrong. They are right in decrying a well-known evil: interpreters tend to impute to authors opinions that the authors did not express. They are wrong in the remedy they propose, for they take it for granted that all an interpreter has to do is to look at a text and see what is there. This is quite mistaken.

The principle of the empty head, of lauding exegesis and condemning eisegesis, rests on a naive intuitionism. So far from tackling the complex task of, first, understanding the object, the words, the author, oneself, secondly, of judging just how correct one's understanding is and, thirdly, of adverting to the problems in expressing one's understanding and judgment, the principle of the empty head bids the interpreter forget his own views, look at what is out there, let the author interpret himself. In fact, what is out there? There is just a series of signs. Anything over and above a re-issue of the same signs in the same order will be mediated by the experience, intelligence, and judgment of the interpreter. The less that experience, the less cultivated that intelligence, the less formed that judgment, the greater the likelihood that the interpreter will impute to the author an opinion that the author never entertained. On the other hand, the wider the interpreter's experience, the deeper and fuller the development of his understanding, the better balanced his judgment, the greater the likelihood that he will discover just what the

author meant. Interpretation is not just a matter of looking at signs. That is imperative. But it is no less imperative that, guided by the signs, one proceed from one's habitual general knowledge to actual and more particular knowledge; and the greater the habitual knowledge one possesses, the greater the likelihood that one will be guided by the signs themselves and not by personal preference and by guesswork.

In this connection, I would like to quote Rudolf Bultmann: 'Nothing is sillier than the requirement that an interpreter must silence his subjectivity, extinguish his individuality, if he is to attain objective knowledge. That requirement makes good sense only insofar as it is taken to mean that the interpreter has to silence his personal wishes with regard to the outcome of the interpretation ... For the rest, unfortunately, the requirement overlooks the very essence of genuine understanding. Such understanding presupposes precisely the utmost liveliness of the understanding subject and the richest possible development of his individuality.' From an article entitled 'Das Problem der Hermeneutik,' *Zschr. f. Theol. u. Kirche* 47 (1950) 64. Reprinted in *Glauben and Verstehen*, II, 230.

The first topic, then, is understanding the object and the rejection of the principle of the empty head. The more you know about the objects, the better, and the better you will understand.

3 Understanding the Words

Understanding the object accounts for the plain meaning of the text, the meaning that is obvious because both author and interpreter understand the same thing in the same way. However, as in conversation, so too in reading, the author may be speaking of *P* and the reader may be thinking of *Q*. In that case, sooner or later, there arises difficulty. Not everything true of *P* will also be true of *Q*, and so the author will appear to the interpreter to be saying what is false and even absurd.

Here we get the difference between the controversialist and the exegete. When the controversialist finds that the statements about *Q* are all false, he has just what he wants. He sets about his triumphant demonstration of the author's errors and absurdities. But the interpreter considers the possibility that he himself is at fault. He reads further. He rereads. Eventually he stumbles on the possibility that the author was thinking, not of *Q*, but of *P*, and with that correction the meaning of the text becomes plain.

Now this process can occur any number of times. It is part and parcel of the self-correcting process of learning. It is the manner in which we acquire and develop common sense. It heads towards a limit in which we possess a habitual core of insights that enables us to deal with any situation, or any text of a group, by adding one or two more insights relevant to the situation or text in hand.

Such commonsense understanding is preconceptual. It is not to be confused with one's formulation of the meaning of the text that one has come to understand. This formulation itself is not to be confused with the judgments one makes on the truth of the understanding and formulation. One has to understand if one is to formulate what one has understood. One has to understand and formulate if one is to pass judgment in any explicit fashion.

Moreover, it is this preconceptual understanding that surmounts the hermeneutic circle. The meaning of a text is an intentional entity. It is a unity that is unfolded through parts, sections, chapters, paragraphs, sentences, words. We can grasp the unity, the whole, only through the parts. At the same time the parts are determined in their meaning by the whole which each part partially reveals. Such is the hermeneutic circle. Logically it is a circle. But coming to understand is not a logical deduction. It is a self-correcting process of learning that spirals into the meaning of the whole by using each new part to fill out and qualify and correct the understanding reached in reading the earlier parts. It is an increasing understanding, and each new part complements, and corrects and qualifies

the understanding already attained, and it is the final product of the whole process that is the understanding of the whole.

Rules of hermeneutics or exegesis list the points worth considering in one's efforts to arrive at an understanding of the text. Such are an analysis of the composition of the text, the determination of the author's purpose, knowledge of the people for whom he wrote, of the occasion on which he wrote, of the nature of the linguistic, grammatical, stylistic means he employed. However, the main point about all such rules is that one does not understand the text because one has observed the rules but, on the contrary, one observes the rules in order to arrive at an understanding of the text. In fact, the rules are a heuristic structure; they suggest questions for you to investigate, and the result of that investigation will be an understanding of the text. Observing the rules can be no more than mere pedantry that leads to an understanding of nothing of any moment or even to missing the point entirely. The essential observance is to note one's every failure to understand clearly and exactly and to sustain one's reading and rereading until one's inventiveness or good luck have eliminated one's failures in comprehension. The ongoing process in understanding the words is to note what you don't understand, and that is a thing that is very hard to notice; you notice what you do understand, but why did he say it differently? Would you express it that way yourself? You close the gap between the text and your understanding by spotting what there is in the text that your understanding does not account for.

Understand the object, understand the words, and next, understand the author.

4 Understanding the Author

When the meaning of a text is plain, then with the author by his words we understand the object to which his words refer. When a simple misunderstanding arises, as when the author thought of *P* but the reader of *Q*, then its correction is the relatively simple matter

of sustained rereading and inventiveness. But there can arise the need of a long and arduous use of the self-correcting process of learning. Then a first reading yields a little understanding and a host of puzzles, and a second reading yields only slightly more understanding but far more puzzles. The problem, now, is a matter not of understanding the object or the words but of understanding the author himself, his nation, language, time, culture, way of life, and cast of mind.

Now the self-correcting process of learning is not only the way in which we acquire our own common sense, but also the way in which we acquire an understanding of other peoples' common sense. Even with our contemporaries with the same language, culture, and station in life, we not only understand things with them but we also understand things in our way and, at the same time, we understand their different way of understanding the same things. We can remark that a phrase or an action is 'just like you.' By that we mean that the phrase or action fits in with the way we understand your way of understanding and going about things. But just as we can come to an understanding of our fellows' understanding, a commonsense grasp of the ways in which we understand not with them but them, so the same process can be pushed to a far fuller development, and then the self-correcting process of learning will bring us to an understanding of the common sense of another place, time, culture, and cast of mind. This is, however, the enormous labor of becoming a scholar. It is what Gadamer calls *Horizontverschmelzung*, merging horizons, or the fusion of horizons.

The phrase 'understanding another's common sense' must not be misunderstood. It is not a matter of understanding what common sense is. That is the task of the cognitive theorist. It is not making another's common sense one's own, so that one would go about speaking and acting like a fifth-century Athenian or a first-century Christian. But, just as common sense itself is a matter of understanding what to say and what to do in any of series of situations that commonly arise, so too understanding

another's common sense is a matter of understanding what he would say and what he would do in any of the situations that commonly arose in his place and time.

5 Understanding Oneself

The major texts, the classics, in religion, letters, philosophy, theology, not only are beyond the initial horizon of their interpreters but also may demand an intellectual, moral, religious conversion of the interpreter over and above the broadening of his horizon. In this case the interpreter's initial knowledge of the object is just inadequate. He will come to know it only insofar as he pushes the self-correcting process of learning to a revolution in his own outlook. He can succeed in acquiring that habitual understanding of an author that spontaneously finds his wavelength and locks on to it, only after he has converted [sic] a radical change in himself.

This is the existential dimension of the problem of hermeneutics. It lies at the very root of the perennial divisions of mankind in their views on reality, morality, and religion. Moreover, insofar as conversion is only the basic step, insofar as there remains the labor of thinking out everything from the new and profounder viewpoint, there results the characteristic of the classic set forth by Friedrich Schlegel: 'A classic is a writing that is never fully understood. But those that are educated and continue educating themselves must always want to learn more from it.'

From this existential dimension there follows another basic component in the task of hermeneutics. The classics ground a tradition. They create the milieu in which they are studied and interpreted. They produce in the reader through the cultural tradition the mentality, the *Vorverständnis*, from which they will be read, studied, interpreted. Now such a tradition may be genuine, authentic, a long accumulation of insights, adjustments, reinterpretations, that repeats the original message afresh for each age. In that case the reader will exclaim, as did the disciples on the way to Emmaus: 'Did not our hearts burn

within us, when he spoke on the way and opened to us the scriptures?’ (Luke 24.32). On the other hand, the tradition may be unauthentic. It may consist in a watering-down of the original message, in recasting it into terms and meanings that fit into the assumptions and convictions of those that have dodged the issue of radical conversion. In that case a genuine interpretation will be met with incredulity and ridicule, as was St Paul when he preached in Rome and was led to quote Isaiah: ‘Go to this people and say: you will hear and hear, but never understand; you will look and look, but never see’ (Acts 28.26). At this point one moves from the functional specialty ‘interpretation’ to the functional specialties ‘history,’ ‘dialectic,’ and ‘foundations.’ If the interpreter is to know, not merely what his author meant, but also what is so, then he has to be critical not merely of his author but also of the tradition that has formed his own mind. With that step he is propelled beyond writing history to making history.

So much for the four aspects of understanding in interpretation: understanding the objects referred to, the words that refer, the author that speaks, and the subject that interprets.

6 Judging the Correctness of One’s Interpretation

Such a judgment has the same criterion as any judgment on the correctness of commonsense insights. The criterion is whether or not one’s insights are invulnerable, whether or not they hit the bull’s eye, whether or not they meet all relevant questions, so that there are no further questions that can lead to further insights and so complement, qualify, correct the insights already possessed. The criterion, then, is, Are there any further relevant questions that my understanding does not account for?

The relevant questions usually are not the questions that inspire the investigation. One begins from one’s own state of the question, *Fragestellung*, from the viewpoint, interests, concerns one had prior to studying the text. But the study of the text is a process

of learning. As one learns, one discovers more and more the questions that concern the author, the issues that confronted him, the problems he was trying to solve, the material and methodical resources at his disposal for solving them. So one comes to set aside one's own initial interests and concerns to share those of the author, to reconstruct the context of his thought and speech.

But what precisely is meant by the word 'context'? What is a context that determines what further questions would be relevant? There are two meanings. There is the heuristic meaning the word has at the beginning of an investigation, and it tells one where to look to find the context. There is the actual meaning the word acquires as one moves out of one's initial horizon and moves to a fuller horizon that includes a significant part of the author's.

Heuristically, then, the context of the word is the sentence. The context of the sentence is the paragraph. The context of the paragraph is the chapter. The context of the chapter is the book. The context of the book is the author's *opera omnia*, his life and times, the state of the question in his day, his problems, prospective readers, scope and aim.

Actually, context is the interweaving of questions and answers in limited groups. To answer any one question will give rise to further questions. To answer them will give rise to still more. But, while this process can recur a number of times, while it might go on indefinitely if one keeps changing the topic, still it does not go on indefinitely on one and the same topic. A context, then, is a nest of interlocked or interwoven questions and answers; it is limited inasmuch as all the questions and answers have a bearing, direct or indirect, on a single topic; and because it is limited, there comes a point in an investigation when no further relevant questions arise, and then the possibility of judgment has emerged. When there are no further relevant questions, there are no further insights to complement, correct, qualify those that have been reached, and one has reached an invulnerable position.

Still, one may ask what is this single topic that limits the set of relevant questions and answers? As the distinction between the heuristic and the actual meanings of the word 'context' makes plain, the single topic is something to be discovered in the course of the investigation. By persistence or good luck or both one hits upon some element in the interwoven set of questions and answers. One follows up one's discovery by further questions. Sooner or later one hits upon another element, then several more. There is a period in which insights multiply at a great rate, when one's perspectives are constantly being reviewed, enlarged, qualified, refined. One reaches a point when the overall view emerges, when other components fit into the picture in a subordinate manner, when further questions yield ever diminishing returns, when one can say just what was going forward and back it up with the convergence of multitudinous evidence.

The single topic, then, is something that can be indicated generally in a phrase or two yet unfolded in an often enormously complex set of subordinate and interconnected questions and answers. One reaches that set by striving persistently to understand the object, understand the words, understand the author and, if need be, understand oneself. The key to success is to keep adverting to what has not yet been understood, for that is the source of further questions, and to hit upon these further questions directs attention to the parts or aspects of the text where answers may be found. So R.G. Collingwood has praised '... the famous advice of Lord Acton, "study problems, not periods."' So Gadamer has praised Collingwood's insistence that knowledge consists, not just in propositions, but in answers to questions, so that to understand the answers one has to know the questions as well. But my present point is not merely the significance of questions as well as answers, though, of course, that is in full accord with my cognitional theory, but also regards the interlocking of questions and answers and the eventual enclosure of that interrelated multiplicity within a higher limited unity. For it is the emergence of that enclosure that enables one to recognize the task as completed and to

pronounce one's interpretation as probable, highly probable, in some respects, perhaps, certain.

7 A Clarification

A few contrasts may add clarity to what I have been saying. Collingwood has conceived history as re-enacting the past. Schleiermacher has contended that the interpreter will understand the text better than the author did. There is something in these statements that is very true, but they can be misleading. To clear things up let me take a concrete example. Thomas Aquinas effected a remarkable development in the theology of grace. He did so not at a single stroke but in a series of writings over a period of a dozen years or more. Now, while there is no doubt that Aquinas was quite conscious of what he was doing on each of the occasions on which he returned to the topic of grace, still on none of the earlier occasions was he aware of what he would be doing on the later occasions, and there is just no evidence that after the last occasion he went back over all his writings on the matter, observed each of the long and complicated series of steps in which the development was effected, grasped their interrelations, saw just what moved him forward and, perhaps, what held him back in each of the steps. But such a reconstruction of the whole process is precisely what the interpreter does. His overall view, his nest of questions and answers, is precisely a grasp of this array of interconnections and interdependences constitutive of a single development.

What I find true, then, in Schleiermacher's contention is that the interpreter may understand very fully and accurately something that the author knew about only in a very vague and general fashion. Moreover, this precise knowledge will be of enormous value in interpreting the text. But it does not follow that the interpreter will understand the text better than the author did for, while the interpreter can have a firm grasp of all that was going forward, it is rare indeed that he will have access to sources and circumstances that

have to be known if the many accidentals in the text are to be accounted for. Again, with respect to Collingwood, it is true that the interpreter or historian reconstructs but it is not true that in thought he reproduces the past. In our example, what Aquinas was doing, was developing the doctrine of grace. What the interpreter was doing, was building up the evidence for an element in the history of the theology of grace and, while he can arrive at a grasp of the main movement and an understanding of many details, he rarely achieves and never needs an understanding of every detail. Judgment rests on the absence of further *relevant* questions.

The reader may feel, however, that I have been arguing from a very special case, from which general conclusions should not be drawn. Certainly, I have not been arguing about a case that is universal, for I have already affirmed that there are cases in which the hermeneutical problem is slight or non-existent. The question, accordingly, is, How general are the main lines of the instance from which I have argued?

First, then, my instance was from the history of ideas. It is quite a broad field and of major interest to theological method. But it is uncluttered by the complexities involved in interpreting instances of intersubjective, artistic, symbolic, or incarnate meaning. In these cases understanding the author is inadequate unless the interpreter has some capacity to feel what the author felt and to respect the values that the author respected. But this is re-enactment, not in understanding and thought, but in feeling and value judgments .

Secondly, even within the history of ideas, the selected instance was exceptionally clear-cut. But while the same clarity is not to be had in other types of instance, the points that here are clear either recur in other instances or possess different features that compensate. In the first place there is always the distinction between the author's consciousness of his activities and his knowledge of them. Authors are always conscious of their intentional operations but to reach knowledge of them there must be added introspective attention, inquiry and understanding, reflection and judgment. Further, this

process from consciousness to knowledge, if more than general and vague, is arduous and time-consuming; it leads into the impasse of scrutinizing the self-scrutinizing self and into the oddity of the author who writes about himself writing; such authors are exceptional. Finally, the selected example was a slow development that can be documented. But any notable development occurs slowly. The insight that provokes the cry 'Eureka' is just the last insight in a long series of slowly accumulating insights. This process can be documented if the author writes steadily while it is going forward. On the other hand, if he does not write until the development is completed, his presentation will approximate logical or even systematic form, and this will reveal the nest of relevant questions and answers.

So much, then, for judging the correctness of an interpretation. We have concentrated on the possibility of this judgment. On actual judgment little can be said. It depends on many factors and, in a general discussion, these factors can be no more than hypothetical. Let us suppose that an exegete has grasped with great accuracy just what was going forward and that his understanding of the text can be confirmed by multitudinous details. Now, if really there are no further questions, his interpretation will be certain. But there may be further relevant questions that he has overlooked and, on this account, he will speak modestly. Again, there may be further relevant questions to which he adverts, but he is unable to uncover the evidence that would lead to a solution. Such further questions may be many or few, of major or minor importance. It is this range of possibilities that leads exegetes to speak with greater or less confidence or diffidence and with many careful distinctions between the more probable and the less probable elements in their interpretations.