

Insight & Beyond: Lecture 10, Part II: *Insight*, Chapter 6 §§2.5-2.7:
Dramatic Pattern of Experience and Dramatic Bias

Due to a technical difficulty, the audio for this class, originally given on November 11, 2009, was lost. The presentation you will be watching is a re-recording that was done on January 7, 2010. Unfortunately the students were on break, so Parts I & II are lectures and have no student participation.

[0:00]

- The Dramatic Pattern of Experience
- The first work of human artistry concerns our own living
- The dramatic artistry of shaping one's own life amid others
- Aristotle's notion of *praxis* (= self-making) vs. our ordinary meaning of "practical" (Aristotle's "*poesis*").
- Dramatic pattern of experience selects from among neural demands for the sake of gaining insights into how to live with others in an artistically elegant way.
- Incorporation of feelings into a dramatic way of life (in contrast to role of feelings in scientific patterning).
- Importance of feelings of values in the drama of human living.
- Dramatic insights are essential for the constitution of human personality.

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- Intelligence and the Dramatic Constitution of Dramatic Subjectivity
- The Dramatic Pattern concerns *how* we live amid others (our role, our character).
- As the dramatic pattern organizes experiences for the sake of seeking dramatic insights, the pattern transforms itself as it gains those insights.
- Example of persuading someone, the cues we pick up on, and the role of the self-correcting cycle.
- Various roles are constantly tested out, and insights into these roles are constituted by the continual accumulation of dramatic insights.

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- Performing versus Rehearsing (acting upon our insights or only imagining acting on them).
- What is acted out in play at early stages, we are later able to "act out" in imagination in the dramatic quest for insights into how to live.
- What comes to consciousness in the dramatic pattern are images in service of insights into how to live. The imaginative and affective elements come into consciousness because of the intellectual *desiring* of those insights into how to live.
- The self-correcting process not only gives rise to dramatic insights, but refines and improves them in constituting the well-integrated persona.
- The relation of Lonergan to the thought of Carl Jung: construction and aberrations in self-correction.
- Normatively, the cycle of rehearsal should be in support of the cycle of performance; but aberrations (dramatic biases) cause a separation of the two.
- Lonergan's take on Jung's aim of reintegrating of the internal *ego* with the external *persona*.

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- The Dramatic Pattern and Neural Demand Functions: The censor or gatekeeper.
- Dramatic Intelligence and Embodied Subjectivity: How the censor serves our interests.

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- Dramatic Pattern and Embodied Subjectivity
- All our experiencing is rooted in our embodied, biological constitution.

- Further, our bodies are situated in the natural, physical, biological universe, so our actions have causal consequences in the natural world, which in turn thereby bring about changes in our experiences and initiate a new turn in the self-correcting cycle.
- We thus set experiences of ourselves in motion (speaking, gesturing, performing among others).
- The Dramatic Subject is thus always an Embodied Subject.

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- Not only does our patterning select from our neural processes, but those processes also “demand” psychic representation and conscious integration, with greater or lesser degrees of intensity.
- Our nervous systems communicate to our consciousnesses of the states of our bodies.
- Respecting one's own neural demands: avoiding integration leads to the anguish of abnormality.

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- Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society*
- The relatively long childhood of humans and its effects on personality/identity.
- There is less predetermination of neural patterns in humans at birth than in most other animal species – more plasticity, more numerous residues of non-systematic processes that can be integrated by learning.
- How a good culture, community, and family provides resources for children to learn to elegantly integrate neural demands in an elegant, intelligent way that promotes good living.
- But also, when particular cultures or individual circumstances fail to provide resources (i.e., sufficient accumulated insights) needed for such integrations, then dramatic bias (psychological distortions) result. (E.g., traditional identities developed for one culture and time can become obsolete.)
- More correction by the self-correcting cycle is required to modify the culture's inventory of insights needed to intelligently integrate neural demands under changed circumstances.

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- Erikson's theory of infantile sexuality; five or so major organic developments that pose major challenges for intelligent integration.
- Example of the intense trauma of teething during infancy.
- Identity accrues on the basis of insights accumulated during of each of the 8 critical stages of childhood development that Erikson identifies.
- Failure to negotiate these ‘crisis periods’ leaves unresolved tensions and anxieties that hamper human judgment.
- Erickson focuses on three cultures (German, American, and Russian) and the difficulties each culture faces in assisting its children in successfully growing through these 8 stages.

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- Critical Stages of Ego Formation
- The social nature of human development: the experiences that are given to us to pattern are largely derived from the actions of other human beings in a social and cultural milieu.
- Learning our roles in the presence of other ‘characters’ in the ongoing drama of human history.
- Case study of Sam: the complex relation between a child's organic development and his social context.

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- The complex social and cultural dimensions of nursing a child.
- Differing cultural practices in child rearing (swaddling, scheduled feeding, etc) serve the culture's general aims and condition the child's cultural persona.

- In Lonergan’s terms, nursing is a variable phenomenon that always takes place in a drama of living. Erikson’s phrases “intrinsic wisdom” and “unconscious planfulness” correspond to Lonergan’s idea of the social accumulation of commonsense insights.
- The American cultural context: the frontier society and the resulting tension between Americans as sedentary vs. migratory; as having both ‘roots and wings.’

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- Dramatic Bias and Psychological Disturbance
- The problem – i.e., the *desire* to learn how to live with elegance and dignity in the presence of other humans.
- Lonergan’s unique claim that dramatic bias (psychological disturbance) is due at least in part the inverse of the *desire* of inquiry – namely, the *fear* of insights.
- This fear can take over the patterning and exclude images conducive not only the first unwanted insight, but the retinue of further self-correcting insights that lead to a refined way of living.
- Primary censorship (constructive and oriented toward insights) *versus* aberration of censorship which functions principally to introduce images that interfere with attaining the unwanted insights.

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- Examples of the above: Wilhelm Stekel’s case study of Mr. Iota and his counting fixation; case study of Sam and his fear of causing his grandmother's death.

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- Dramatic Bias and Non-Intelligibility
- Besides the lack of images, the perspective or arrangement of images might also obscure insights.
- Example: Mr. Iota's inability to see how his dreams clearly depicted his own life traumas.
- The essential role of inquiry and insight in therapeutic process.

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- Dramatic Bias
- The answer to “Why are all these experiential elements in this person’s consciousness?” when the person is suffering dramatic bias – the answer is that there is no answer.
- A lack of coherence in one's experience, or *scotosis*, results in the exclusion of insights.

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- § 2.7.7 A Note on Method: How Lonergan overcomes Freud’s deterministic model of the libido.
- Lonergan saw Freud's achievement as distinct from the latter’s determinism (an extra-scientific opinion).
- Lonergan using his “dialectical method” to promote the “position” and reverse the “counterposition” in Freud’s work.
- The determinism of Freud's thermodynamic model of consciousness/libido.
- Lonergan reminds us of the non-systematic nature neural impulses and the possibility of higher integration of what was not systematized at lower levels.
- The non-systematicity of the neural impulses makes it possible to gain insights by trial and error process; after which our imagination and experience can be reorganized.
- This preserves the genuine human autonomy – self-rule – of intelligence and free will in human action.

End of Part II.