Review of previous class: the centrality of the exigence for the consistency between knowing and doing, and the question of the kind of knowledge with which doing must be consistent

The question of knowing of value and obligation

Method of Ethics in *Insight*

Analogous to the method of metaphysics, the method of ethics was supposed to be derived from the expansion of consciousness into the compound structure of knowing and doing

This would involve a heuristic anticipation of all ethical positions, and of the structure of the good, parallel to the way he proceeded in the case of the method of metaphysics

One would expect, therefore, that the method of ethics should begin with an explication of the compound structure of knowing and doing

But Lonergan does not do this

The Structure of Knowing and Doing:
Lonergan gives something like the structure of knowing and doing in §2, rather than at the beginning of Chapter 18

Lowest (0th) Level: The Canon of Statistical Residues (Chapter 3) characterizes the preconscious, natural, environmental setting of our ethical activity as known by natural science

Our experiencing is not completely determined by external natural events; because of statistical residues, there is a degree of autonomy already at the level of patterning of experiences (i.e., utilizing the non-systematic potencies of brain activity)

First Conscious Level: “Underlying sensitive flow” – our sensations as patterned, setting the conditions for our questions and answers

Second Level: Practical insights into possible courses of action

Third Level: Practical reflections questions about motives, consequences, obligation regarding the intelligible courses of actions from practical insights

Fourth Act (but in *Insight* not a 4th level) has to do (implicitly) with questions for decision and acts of deciding.

Genuineness (authenticity) in knowing was a matter of asking and answering all the further pertinent questions.

So also, authenticity in ethical matters would seem to be asking and answering all the further pertinent questions in this expanded structure, and the ways this implies a method of ethics

But Lonergan does not proceed in this fashion

This is because Lonergan considers the acts in this structure not for their implications for a heuristic structure of ethics, but for their significance for the question of freedom.

The significance for freedom of canon of statistical residues lies in the way it disposes of the most obvious objection to the possibility of freedom – i.e., that scientific determinism undermines human freedom and ethics. Lonergan’s response to Kant’s problem

Survey of how the Newtonian tradition led to the extra-scientific opinion of determinism

Lonergan hints, however, that there are real impediments to human freedom, not the illusory
impediments attributed to the scientific laws of nature

[29:22]
• Student question regarding the levels of consciousness in the structure of knowing and doing
  – In Insight, Lonergan speaks of “the expansion of consciousness” to include doing along with knowing.
  – He does not however speak in Insight of an addition level of consciousness that comes into play with the expansion to include doing.
  – §2 is more or less a recapitulation of the three levels of acts of consciousness treated earlier in Insight
  – Clarification that the fourth level that appears in the preceding diagram reflects Lonergan’s post-Insight thinking, and is not the position of Insight itself

[33:01]
• The significance for freedom of the “underlying sensitive flow”:
• Although the natural world conditions our exercise of freedom, we exercise a degree of autonomy relative to nature when we pattern our experiences
• Once developed, mere sensitive routines are set outside the realm of genuine freedom and ethics
• Examples of cerebral palsy and addiction as affecting sensitive flows, are therefore not immediately matters of freedom or ethics

[38:29]
• Practical insights and their relation to human freedom: students propose the significance has to do with properly assessing the situation, and with possible courses of action
• Properly understanding the situation includes understanding the situation as part of the unfolding of the emergent probability of proportionate being

[42:42]
• Student question about a dramatic, urgent event (e.g., child in peril) – if could slow the process down, would we still see that process of deliberation, rather than an “almost instinctive,” unconscious reaction
  – “Almost instinctive” suggests the presence of something like the structure of practical reflection is operative
  – But the broader context is something Lonergan discusses in §1.2 of this chapter
  – Willingness often presupposes a high degree of training, practice and learning prior to the emergency to which one responds
  – So the structure is operative, but not in the present moment of the emergency; it is present in the past as preparation
  – Relationship to Aristotle’s account of virtues

[48:42]
• Lonergan’s concern is to reveal that freedom in the proper sense does not reside in practical insights
• Practical insights do not automatically determine what one will do

[52:20]
• The relevance of practical reflection to freedom:
• What is practical reflection?
• It involves asking further pertinent questions, arriving at a virtually unconditioned, meaning that the practical insight about which one reflects is correct.
• How can a practical insight be correct if the course of action is not yet realized?
  – Discussion; answer not clear from the text
  – The text does not really help us explore what we are doing when we are reflecting practically as it does in the areas of cognitional reflecting
  – Lonergan seems to be hurrying to the discussion of essential and effective freedom
  – Lonergan does say there is an internal term wherein one grasps as virtually unconditioned the certitude that the possible course of action is indeed possible, or agreeable, useful, obligatory
  – But ultimately the reflecting is practical – it is for the sake of doing, the external term

[1:10:42]
• Student question about “how we make being” when we make a decision
  – The dynamism of finality is constitutive of the reality of the universe, of proportionate being
  – Human beings make being by setting the conditions for the emergence of something
• Further questions as to whether one’s decision itself is also an addition to being
  – It is.
  – In a general metaphysical sense, our decisions, and the way they set conditions for emergences (“the making of being”) is the same as everything else sets conditions for emergences
  – It is different because our setting of conditions rests upon practical insights and practical reflections, unlike every other entity in the universe

[1:18:03]
• Inventory of some of the further questions that take place in practical reflection
• Lonergan never explicitly says that the criterion of reaching the internal term, the correctness of the practical insight, is the absence of further pertinent questions, but the passages in Insight certainly point to that conclusion.
• Invitation to the viewer to reflect on the activities that follow when one asks, “Should I do it?” (question guiding practical reflection) vs. “Will I do it?” (question for decision)
• To be a moral knower is to be someone who heeds the call to pursue all further pertinent questions that are prompted by “Should I do it?”

[1:22:47]
• The expansion from rational consciousness to rational self-consciousness – giving ourselves reasons for that we do. Lonergan’s nod to Kant, though profoundly reconstructed

[1:24:08]
• Difference in the rationality involved in rational self-consciousness vs. rational consciousness – rationality in the latter sense is the non-interference with ongoing inquiry.
• Whereas the rationality of the doer is positive consistency between knowing and doing

[1:26:51]
• The unique, radial contingency of human acts of decision
• The contingency of the act of will, of human decisions, is the imposition of further intelligible order upon merely coincidental manifolds at lower levels
• The radical form of contingency is that which comes to be only through human deciding
• The fact that people don’t do what they know they are supposed to do, is evidence
Human radical contingency of the will is *sui generis* – there isn’t anything else like human deciding anywhere else in the universe.

Student question about passage stating a radical difference between the contingence of willing (deciding) vs. all the other forms of contingence in the universe:

- Radical difference in things that emerge because of human decisions
- The natural contingent events fall short of being genuinely free
- Contrast with the affirmation of freedom at every level in Whitehead’s thought
- In natural, non-volitional contingency, which depends on the non-systematic character of the universe, once the conditions are given, the event must occur – contingent necessity
- But in human freedom, even though the conditions are given, the act of decision does not have to happen
- The non-systematic processes in nature have contingency, but it is not the special contingency that characterizes human freedom.

End of Part I.