

## Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 12, Part II: Chapter 18: “The Possibility of Ethics,” §1 Method in Ethics

[0:00]

- Human freedom is a compound of experiencing, practical insight, practical reflection and decisions – but the most fundamental constituent of human freedom is the radical contingency of the decision

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- One would expect Lonergan to next show the implications of this analysis in § 2 for a method of ethics
- Reprise of the isomorphism between knowing and being at the heart of the method of metaphysics, as the likely parallel for working out a method of ethics
- Lonergan states that the “division and the hierarchy of values” reveal how the exigence for consistency between knowing and doing “unfolds into a body of precepts concretely operative in moral consciousness” – but he does not expand upon this remark
- Question of what Lonergan meant by that statement.
- Division of values into true and false, terminal and originating, actual or in process, and hierarchical
- Discussion of the differences and relations among different kinds of values
- Lonergan defines value: “Value is the possible object of choice.”
- The constitutive factor of value is choice that is consistent with our knowing.
- Discussion of why are objects of desire values “only inasmuch as they fall under some intelligible order”?
- Objects of desire are conditioned by intelligible social orders (which are the conditions for their continual supply), and social orders are conditioned by human choices.
- So the constitutive role of choice passes from choosing through orders to objects of desire.
- This relation of conditioned and conditioning establishes a hierarchy of values
- The most basic value, and therefore the highest value, is originating value – the decision-making capacity that grounds all other human goods

[20:06]

- Transition to the Ontology of the Good
- In the discussion of the division and hierarchy of values, Lonergan is claiming that everything originated by human choosing is good (insofar as it meets the exigence for consistency with knowing)
- In the ontology of the good, he now expands that to claim that *everything* that *is*, is good.
- The key to his argument is that one cannot consistently choose as good the conditioned without becoming involved with also choosing the concrete conditions for that good, whether one realizes this or not.
- And the universal order of emergent probability is the condition for every proportionate being, and is, therefore, good when *anything* is chosen as of value.
- “Act locally, think globally” for Lonergan means acting in a way that is mindful of the implications for the emergence of the destiny of the whole universe
- This is the gist of Lonergan’s approach to the method of ethics in Chapter 18

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- Student question about how it is possible to do anything that is morally or ethically wrong, if the universe really is indeterminately directed?
  - This question is similar to a previous question as to whether meaning is greater than being
  - The distinction between true and false values is relevant here

- A false value is a plan put into action without being motivated by a grasp of the virtually unconditioned.
- What is put into play by such decisions is a social surd – a mixture of the intelligible and the unintelligible
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- Follow-up question taken from *Topics in Education*, where it seems that Lonergan is saying that defects in intelligibility lead to break downs. How is the discussion of obligatoriness related to that.
  - Knowledge of obligation is reached at the end of the self-correcting process, where there are no further questions to further correct our course of action.
  - When that is lacking, what is put into play is defective intelligibility which does eventually lead to breakdown

[35:51]

- Brief overview of the “Problem of Liberation”; fuller discussion deferred to class on Chapter 20

End of Part II.