

Lecture 13, Part II: Chapter 8, “Things”

[0:00]

- Relation of Chapter 8 on “Things” to earlier concerns about the real, the intelligible, and the longer cycle of decline.
- Animal vs. Human Realism.
- Human realism is linked to what Lonergan means by “thing.”
- Naive realism (an incoherent blend of animal and human realism) vs. critical realism (full development of human authenticity, as committed to the self-correcting cycle of inquiry).
- Being human animals, not animal humans.
- The tension between being an animal and being human.
- Beginning to explore the implications of what we are doing when we are knowing.

[4:04]

- Patterns of experience as the ground of this discussion.
- Consciousness distinguishes animals from plants.
- The animal (biological) way of *extroverted* patterning conscious experiencing is related to its benefits for survival, nourishment, reproduction.
- Primary philosophical concern is the ways in which the biological patterning can interfere with the self-correcting process of inquiry, and its notion of the real.
- Extroversion as the primary characteristic of biological patterning and *its* notion of the real.

[6:24]

- ‘Body’ as an object of biological patterning.
- Animal biological patterning of consciousness as ‘already out there real’, does the following:
 - *Already*: It finds the environment rather than creating it.
 - *Out*: It is only aware of outer objects; is not aware of consciousness as the ground of its objects.
 - It takes *that which is outside itself* as valuable (i.e., necessary to survival).
 - *There and Now*: If not ‘there’ and ‘now,’ then has no biological usefulness.
- ‘Already out there now’ denotes the ‘right stuff,’ the minimal criterion, of what may or may not be real to a biologically extroverted consciousness (a precondition for biological utility). Example of wasps’ interests in whatever resembles a hole.

[12: 35]

- Animal Realism and the Metaphysics of Presence
- The ‘already out there now’ is ‘presence’; what is present is taken as the real.
- In this respect, Lonergan shares in the criticism of the metaphysics of the presence.
- Human realism is not limited to presence.
- But because we are also animals, there is a tension in us inclined toward the metaphysics of presence, against which we must struggle.

[15:10]

- Galileo, decadent Aristotelians, Descartes, and Kant accepting the criterion of the real as the ‘already out there now’.
- The human criterion for the real is the intelligible (example of self-appropriation).
- The animal notion of realism repeated interference in the history of philosophy.
- Examples from Descartes (bodily extension as ‘out there’) & Kant (inner sense experience as ‘already now’).

[21:10]

- Recall Chapter 5 on Space and Time: the reality of space and time is not limited to extensions and durations, but rather to the *intelligible ordering* of extensions and durations.
- Thus Lonergan makes an unusually radical break with the presence, or ‘already out there now,’ as the meaning of being.

[22:37]

- *Relation of Chapter 8 to the Issues of Chapter 7:*
- What makes common sense vulnerable to general bias is its concern with the immediate, the here and now.
- Metaphysics of Presence and General Bias
- Common sense is vulnerable to general bias because it privileges what is immediately and concretely present.
- Realism of ‘already out there now’ connected to the vulnerability of our bodies to what is out there – outside our skins.

[25:09]

- Student question: Is animal consciousness something to eliminate or to built upon?
 - Lonergan wants not to do away with animal criteria of reality but to prevent it from interfering with the human ones, through a process of appropriating the former. It takes *that which is outside itself* as valuable (i.e., necessary to survival).
 - Discussion of what human living is, in Aristotle and in Lonergan; in comparison with Nietzsche. It takes *that which is outside itself* as valuable (i.e., necessary to survival).

[28:42]

- Human Realism: ‘Thing’
- A ‘thing’ is an intelligible, concrete unity.
- The ‘general notion’ of the thing as the *anticipation* of a certain kind of *understanding*.
- Rarely do we grasp a thing in the full sense: that is, as the intelligible unity of all data in their concrete individuality and totality of aspects.
- Intelligible unifications of spatially and temporally distinct data.

[32:05]

- Exercise: Thing or Body?
- Do the two sets of data (photographs) pertain one thing or two; one body or two?
 - Class Discussion. If one makes the assumption that the caterpillar transformed into the butterfly, one *assumes* that they are the *same* in some way.
 - Such assumption based in the *notion* of the thing as not spatially and temporally distinct, visual data, but as intelligible.
 - Sameness is not in the sensible data, but in the grasp of intelligibility.
 - Unity and sameness don’t *look like* anything – this is “the startling strangeness” about reality.
 - The unity identity pole is not restricted to any particular space and time; nor does it have any appearance in and of itself. The larva and butterfly are each ‘bodily’ and ‘real’ relative to those biological consciousnesses to whom they are useful (predators and mates, respectively), and not to others. It takes *that which is outside itself* as valuable (i.e., necessary to survival).

[38:36]

- Student question about the word ‘concrete’; is the periodic table of elements a ‘thing’?
 - The intelligible unity of the table, as the expression of an abstract insight, is not a thing; but the concrete one hanging on the wall is a thing.
 - Things can be “characterized’ by their properties (i.e., conjugates) or by their places in schemes of recurrence, etc. But these intelligible characterizations are not identical with the full intelligible unity of things.
 - Not only caterpillar-butterfly things, but pets as unique, complicated, intelligible unites.
 - A good way of thinking about our concreteness as individual human beings is to ask, ‘What is our story?’ Our story formulates our intelligible unity. We may share things in common, but the story of our whole life is unique.

[44:00]

- The “Ames Chair” Exercise. Different aspects of things are presented from different perspectives. In one perspective, all three of the things “look like” a chair; but data from a different perspective on two of the sets of things do not look like chairs look from those perspectives.

[47:11]

- Disconcerting problems can arise from the reality of things as intelligible rather than as ‘already out there now’.
- The Dialectic of Knowing and Reality: the two principles of biological patterning *vs.* the unrestricted desire to know pull in different directions.
- The paradox of things being permanent in time, yet subject to change.
- Change is not a ‘newly observed datum’; it is different sensible data while the intelligible unity remains the same.
- This is what Lonergan will mean by “the notion of change” in Chapter 10.

[52:06]

- Among the disconcerting problems that arise from the confusion of the two notions of reality:
- Are atoms real? Mach argued they were only conveniences for calculating connections among the data on chemical reactions.
- According to animal consciousness, they are not ‘present’ and thus are not real.
- What about magnetism, evolution? What about love, friendship, and human identity? God?
- Animal realism reduces the scope of the universe, human realism expands it.
- Animal reality is a much-shrunken whole, compared to the whole of human knowing.

[57:38]

- Exercise: Sketching Gasson Hall.
- Note that people normally sketch the building from a ground view.
- We *characterize* things in terms of *some* of their data, by some privileged profile.
- When we “recognize” someone or something, this signals an insight, a grasp of intelligibility.
- We tend to substitute this profile for the wholeness and reality of the thing.
- Yet the reality of people and things is not reducible to presence, to any profile, let alone to the ‘already out there now’ data on a thing.

End of Part II.