

## Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 13, Part I: Chapter 19: “General Transcendent Knowledge” §§1-5

[0:00]

- Transcendent knowledge has to do with the aspect of being that transcends human experience.
- Proportionate being is what is proportionate to the cognitional structure of the understanding and judging of possible of human experiencing (including both the data of consciousness and the data of sense)
- The definition of being is not limited to what can be known by possible human experiencing, understanding and judging
- Rather, being is whatever is to be grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably – the restriction “about possible human experiencing” is not included in the general definition of being
- How, then, is it possible for humans to know anything about reality that is not known in this way
- This is the way Kant poses one of his problems

[3:09]

- Lonergan’s response is to settle the question of the *possibility* of such knowledge through the route of *actual* knowledge – i.e., it is possible to have such knowledge if one can establish the fact of such knowledge
- Lonergan will offer an affirmative account of general transcendent knowledge, and thereby settle the question of possibility

[5:28]

- Overview of Chapter 19:
- Lonergan first clarifies the meaning of “transcendent,” and then proceeds through a series of preliminary sections to arrive finally at that affirmative account of general transcendent knowledge.
- In particular, §9 on the notion of God works out the sorts of things that can be affirmed about the “unrestricted act of understanding,” and then shows how these conform to a theist’s notion of God
- Then in §10 he argues for the affirmation of an unrestricted act of understanding, and therefore of God
- This is the affirmative account of the actuality of transcendent knowledge (and, implicitly, of the possibility of such knowledge)

[10:18]

- §1: Clarification of the meaning of transcendence
- Beginning with the rejection of the counter-position on knowing – i.e., transcendence misconceived as the problem of how to get from the immanent contents of consciousness to the already out there now real
- This way of posing of the problem of transcendence is insoluble

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- Alternate way of posing the problem of transcendence: “going beyond”
- Spatial symbolism of transcendence and problems of taking this symbolism literally: if reality is already-out-there-now, there is no-thing beyond space
- Refinement of meaning of going beyond, not spatio-temporal, but as questioning

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- Why is spatio-temporal transcendence not adequate for this issue?
- Being is not identical with space and time; they are only constituents of proportionate being
- So going beyond one space-time to another still leaves us within proportionate being, not into

transcendent being

- So transcendence in Lonergan's sense is grounded in asking further questions and the answers to which inquiry leads
- To be human is to be in tension between our self-constitution so far and the inquiry that leads beyond into the unknown
- The *notion* of transcendence: one can *ask whether* human knowing is confined to proportionate being, or goes beyond to being that transcends it

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- But to *ask* whether there is anything beyond proportionate being does not establish that there is transcendent reality

[25:40]

- Lonergan's response to the challenge that belief in a transcendent God is incompatible with reason
- Reason is openness to wherever the questions lead – rejection of obscurantism –which includes questions about whether there is anything beyond proportionate being

[28:18]

- Meaning of “extrapolation”:
- In sciences, using known present circumstances and known classical correlations to infer from one part of proportionate being to another part (“horizontal” extrapolation)
- Generalizing to “vertical” extrapolation – not just higher integrations within proportionate being, but a still higher integration beyond proportionate being

[34:01]

- Need for a different kind of principle of extrapolation than used to extrapolate within proportionate being
- The “principle” of this kind of extrapolation comes in reflecting on the question, “*What is being?*”
- Why doesn't the definition of being in Chapter 12 answer this question?
  - Why the definition of being is not a descriptive definition
  - It is because that definition gives us the heuristic structure of how the question of being is to be known, but not the content
  - Humans do not have an insight into being, and then formulate the insight into a first-order definition. The heuristic definition is only second order.
  - Two closely related topics in Chapter 19: the idea of being, and the unrestricted act of understanding.
  - The unrestricted act of understanding is the “primary component” of the idea of being, but its total content of the idea

[42:10][39:17]

- Student question about whether the extrapolation proceeds from recognizing our own incapacity for grasping the idea of being toward the idea of an unrestricted act of understanding
- Two closely related topics in Chapter 19: the idea of being, and the unrestricted act of understanding.
- The idea of being is the answer to the question “*What is being?*”
- The unrestricted act of understanding is the “primary component” of the idea of being, but its total content
- The idea of being [what *all* of being is] is absolutely transcendent
- The idea of being is the content of the unrestricted act of understanding
- Lonergan will therefore extrapolate to the idea of being by extrapolating to the unrestricted act

of understanding

- This is Lonergan's way of answering Heidegger's question about the meaning of being – the meaning of being is the idea of being
- Since human knowledge of the absolutely transcendent idea of being is extrapolated, it is imperfect, analogous understanding

[43:28]

- Making the idea of being more concrete: What is included in the content of the idea of being?
  - Some of the beings that we know – some of the understandings we have affirmed:
  - Examples: How to drive a car; somethings about people; favorite summer vacation places; favorite flowers; hiking paths, etc.
  - And the things that cannot be seen – relationships, relationships, loves, hatreds
  - Discussion of how friendship is known to be
  - The idea of being includes all the beings we know and more, in all their details, and why they are
  - The idea of being understands everything that is in their totality

[55:00]

- Student question and discussion of relationships in which humans partake that can transcend proportionate being

[59:30]

- Student question and discussion of Descartes and knowledge and the idea of being

[1:02:08]

- Student question and discussion of whether transcendence is beyond temporality, since we raise questions in a temporal sequence
  - While it is true that we raise questions sequentially in time, even so this notion of transcendence leads to the conclusion that both the idea of being and the unrestricted act of understanding are beyond time
  - Though the notion of transcendence is in time, nevertheless it is oriented beyond time

[1:04:33]

- The unrestricted act of understanding as the ultimate limit of the whole process of transcendence

[1:06:17]

- Extrapolation and analogical understanding of the unrestricted act of understanding (as the way to analogical understanding of the idea of being)
- Difference between analogical understanding and “knowing a thing by its essence”
- Difference between the traditional metaphysical terminology of “knowing a thing by its essence” and Lonergan's approach to this issue – recast in explanatory terms

[1:10:54]

- The meaning of analogy (proportion) – a relation between relations – A:B::C:X
- In analogical understanding, X is understood through the other terms and their relations
- Lonergan uses this precise meaning of analogy to extrapolate to the unrestricted act of understanding
- Analogical understanding is similar to be different from a heuristic definition
- This does not yet entail an existence claim; it is a hypothetical understanding: “The unrestricted act of understanding would be like this if it were to exist.”

[1:17:37]

- Discussion of what can be known about the unrestricted act of understanding on the basis of this hypothetical, extrapolated, analogical understanding
- It would understand everything about everything
- Not only understands answers to every question for intelligence, but also to all questions for judgment

End of Part I.