

**Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 13, Part II: Chapter 20: “Special Transcendent Knowledge”
§1: “The Problem”; Chapter 18 §3: “The Problem of Liberation”**

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- §1: The Problem
- Somber beginning concerning the human condition and the disillusionment of the 20th century
- Addressing the challenges of modernity and post-modernity is what Lonergan saw as his objective in writing *Insight*
- The context of the chapter is the historicity of the human condition and the problem of liberation it poses
- The idea of progress has to be won back and placed on a better foundation
- This requires a better understanding of human development and nature of the real impediments to human progress
- That the process of accumulation of insights is only “apparently random” refers the fact that there is some reason why human knowledge develops in this way – a reason known in the unrestricted act of understanding
- And that human development and progress entails communication and collaboration, and the difficulties this poses

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- Hence, the willingness to live according to understanding and knowing is a challenge
- Human development occurs as doing follows knowing
- The problem of essential vs. effective freedom and the problem of liberation of effective freedom
- Essential freedom is radically free, that deciding is not determined by anything other than deciding
- Effective freedom, on the other hand, is determined by the degree of our habitual willingness

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- The heart of the problem is an “antecedent willingness” to be persuaded to a universal willingness to learn all there is to learn about learning and willing (Chapter 19, pp. 660, 690)
- This means an openness to all that is to be learned (where learning means experiencing, inquiring, understanding, and judging)
- This also means a willing the objective of our unrestricted desire to know, willing an openness to universal wisdom, which is the unrestricted act of understanding
- The unrestricted act of understanding is personal – God – and to will the good of a person is to love that person (Chapter 19, pp. 691, 681; Chapter 20, p. 720)
- So the universal willingness is to love God
- This is different from the “good will” of Kant, the categorical imperative

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- What does it mean to say that to will the good of a person is to love the person?
 - Not just willing what would be good for the person
 - Not a willing to make the person good in some way
 - Rather, willing the good that the person already is
 - Universal willing is willing the good that is the unrestricted act of understanding – God
 - Being in love with God is to be in love with knowledge, with the totality of the intelligible
 - After *Insight*, Lonergan will talk about love in quite different terms

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- Chapter 18 §3: The Problem of Liberation:

- We are not born into that universal willingness; we have to be persuaded into it
- This is an enlargement of our effective freedom
- Going from the habitual willingnesses we have acquired while living before one has learned how to live
- The problem of being willing to take time out from living for the sake of intellectual and moral education
- In Chapter 18, Lonergan focuses on the problem as it is faced by each individual; in Chapter 20 the social and historical dimensions are brought to light
- The problem of modernity – the underestimation of what kind and how much progress remains
 - Example of text-messaging as a contemporary cultural phenomenon that can obscure the need to take time out for intellectual and moral education toward universal willingness

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- Chapter 20 §1: “The Problem” – “The Reign of Sin”
- The social and historical conditions that accelerate the individual capitulation of effective freedom
- The reign of sin is the expectation of sin as a “statistical” phenomenon
- Machiavelli’s “realism” in political philosophy (*Realpolitik*) as the expectation of sin – the expectation that people will not develop a willingness cognate with their unrestricted desire to know

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- Lonergan’s version of the Problem of Evil
- What is to be done about the problem of evil?
- One can grasp a certain kind of intelligibility about the human situation using the four heuristic methods – that is just the human condition
- But there is a further intelligibility to be grasped, because of the existence and unrestricted intelligence of God
- Because God is unconditionally good, God wills to do something about the problem

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- Two Problems of Evil:
- Contrast between traditional theodicy problem and Lonergan’s approach to the problem of evil
- Traditional theodicy problem: How can an all-good and omnipotent God exist, since there is evil
- Lonergan’s alternate approach: since an all-good and an omnipotent God (unrestricted act of understanding) does exist, and there is the fact of evil, what is God doing about evil?
- Example of Ingmar Bergman’s film *The Prisoner*
- God is actively doing something about the problem of evil – the deficit of intelligibility
- Special Transcendent Knowledge is the exploration of what can be known philosophically about what God is doing about evil

End of Part II.