

Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 2, Part II: Chapters 12 & 13: “The Notions of Being and Objectivity” & “Cognitive Structure”

[0:00]

- Lonergan’s answer to “Why is doing that knowing?” is found in what he calls “the epistemological theorem.”
- The epistemological theorem:
 - Knowledge is intrinsically objective, that objectivity is the intrinsic relation of knowing and being, and that being and reality are identical.
 - Hence, knowledge in the proper (cognitive structure sense) is knowledge of reality.
- The Notion of Knowing:
- ‘Notion’ as ‘an anticipation’; ‘notion of knowing’ is an anticipation about what knowledge is.
- Everyone has some sort of anticipation, notion, that knowing is about reality.
- But not everyone can say in a definitive way what knowing is or how it is related to reality, or even what reality is.

[5:00]

- Clarifications of Lonergan’s terminology about cognitive structure.
- Knowing is a *structure*: What are the kinds of structures?
 1. Structures that are wholes just as collections
 2. Structured wholes whose parts are just material
 3. Structured wholes whose parts are activities but the structure is not itself changing (“materially dynamic”)
 4. Structured wholes whose parts are activities and which also change their own structures by performing those activities (“formally dynamic”)
- In a formally dynamic structure, both parts and whole are activities.
- The result is a self-modifying, self-constituted whole that changes itself by performing its activities
- Why, then, does the formally dynamic, cognitive structure that we have been studying yield knowledge of reality?

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- Lonergan’s answer to Why Doing *That* is Knowing, is:
- Because the objectivity of human knowing rests on an *unrestricted intention* and an *unconditioned result*.
- Hence, the results of performing those activities are not *restricted* to *Bewusstseinsinhalte*.
- Ch. 12 (“The Notion of Being”) is an exploration of the unrestricted intention.
- The unconditioned result is a judgment grounded in a grasp of the virtually unconditioned.
- The two combined grounds the answer as to why performance of the immanent activities is knowledge in the proper sense.

[11:34]

- “The dynamic structure of human knowing intends being.” (*Cognitive Structure*, 211)
- What exactly is this intention of being, this notion of being.
(Reference to a handout about Lonergan’s several ways of articulating a second-order definition of being.)
- What is the distinction between ‘being’ and the ‘notion of being’?
- Being is what our notion aims at. But what is the notion itself?
- The notion of being is the anticipation of being, which takes the form of inquiry about, and desire for, being. It’s not a concept of being, but a desire to know being that is the notion.

[15:22]

- Series of Student Questions.
- Question about whether being remains a notion, uncontainable by any set of finite judgments.
 - *Being* is not the complete set of correct judgments; our *knowledge of being* would consist in the complete set of correct judgments.
 - Our desire and inquiry are inexhaustible so that indeed no finite set of judgments will not be equal to what we desire – i.e., complete knowledge of being.

[16:51]

- Question confirming that the notion of being is the *eros* of the mind, the pure desire and reasonable anticipation to know.
 - Subsequent discussion of the immediate anticipation of being; the pure desire to know everything about everything, which is even prior to our ability to articulate any questions.
 - Built upon this immediate anticipation of being, are all mediated ideas or assertions about being.

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- Question whether the *eros* for being can be of different intensity in different people?
 - Not a different natural, inherent intensity of desire to know being, but there are differences in the intensity in ways the desire is appropriated.
 - Discussion of how the notion of being is naturally present in all, but is indeed appropriated differently. How people choose to cooperate with the unrestricted desire to know, or not.

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- Question about what ‘intending being’ implies. Does this mean we can never know the totality of being? Would we have to be God to know being?
 - Discussion of how both finite reality and transcendent reality (God) can be intended. Discussion of human dynamism and our desire to know and intention of being.

[23:55]

- The Intention of Being, Notion of Being (resumed).
- A desire to know everything about everything.
- Why should this intention be called an ‘intention of *being*’?
- The intention of being is the “originating drive of knowing.”
- By our inquiry, we go beyond data to intelligibility, then beyond intelligibility to truth, and through truth to being.
- The very notion of knowing implies reality is more than what I know, that being is beyond the humanly known.
- Example of trying to defend a solipsistic position – and failing.
- Even the solipsistic philosophy betrays a notion of being that goes beyond what it knows.
- This notion of being conforms to our expectations about being insofar as the latter includes all that is known and remains to be known.

[36:04]

- Not only do we have a *desire* manifest in our inquiring; in addition that desire is *unrestricted*.
- This claim is of the *utmost* importance in all of Lonergan’s philosophy (and theology).

- The dynamic inquiry must be unrestricted to attain objectivity.
- The invulnerability of insights (as grounds of virtually unconditioned judgments) depends on unrestrictedness of the notion of being.
- If there were realities about which we could not ask, then the criterion of “no further pertinent questions” would be irrelevant to the objectivity of knowing.

[38:49]

- The ideals of knowing (produced by history of philosophy and science) *versus* the spontaneous ideal, notion of knowing (the pure and unrestricted desire to know).
- The spontaneous notion of being is invariant and common to all.
- Developmentally delayed humans do have a spontaneous, unrestricted notion of being, even though they do not always come up with insights as fast as others.

[42:07]

- Lonergan counters objections to the notion of being as *unrestricted* desire to know.
- Efforts to establish that the notion is not all inclusive turn out to suppose that very unrestrictedness.

[46:45]

- Lonergan’s several variations, or corollaries, to his basic second-order definition of being as the “objective of the unrestricted desire to know.” (See handout.)
 - Being known in the totality of true judgments.
 - A judgment is an incremental knowing of being, but is not yet the totality of judgments that amounts to *knowing being*.
- Why is the totality of being said to be known in the totality of *corrected* judgments?
- The *shift* in the way the second order definition is formulated:
 - What's intended by all questioning → what is known in the totality of all judgments.
- Why are these formulations equivalent?

[51:31]

- Student response reveals the reason why the dynamic orientation of cognitional structure is indeed directed towards being – why it is properly called a “notion of being”:
- The very structure of our knowing is oriented towards ‘is’
- The primordial meaning of ‘is’ is our anticipation of “Yes, it *is*.”
- A correct judgment confirms ‘isness’.
- The totality of correct judgments would affirm the totality of ‘isness,’ the totality of being.
- The dynamic structure of knowing is oriented towards being because it is oriented by all the questions about what is; it is oriented toward the totality of judgments about what is, what we have known or may know.

[56:34]

Student question about whether the definition of ‘is’ is atemporal.

- Indeed. It refers to what was, or is not yet, as well as to the immediate present.

[57:28]

- Knowing is intrinsically objective and not restricted to the immanence of consciousness, because our unrestricted desire asks about everything about everything, including whether our understanding is of an appearance or a reality.
- Our asking whether there is anything beyond our consciousness shows the orientation of our consciousness to what transcends it.
- Objectivity is not knowing ‘what's outside my consciousness’ but knowing ‘what is’.

[1:01:18]

- A final questions to consider: *In self-affirmation, am I knowing myself as subject or as object?*