

## **Insight & Beyond: Lecture 3, Part I: Chapter 1 §2: “Definition”**

- Introduction to Lecture 3 (covering the end of Ch. 1 and beginning of Ch. 2)  
Self-appropriation and the Question of the Whole: of Being, Goodness Truth, importance of ‘heuristics’.

- §2 ‘Definition’ of Chapter 1, “Elements”: Why definition is addressed.

[2:54].

- Definitions & Concepts as emerging in a context of activities, not a vacuum.  
Self-appropriation includes becoming aware of how we form our concepts.

[4:29]

- Insights are often inter-relationships and require a number of terms to be expressed.
- This is Lonergan’s solution to the problem of primitive terms.
- Not all insights presuppose other insights.

[5:54]

- 3 kinds of definitions, reviewed.
- Nominal definitions: based on how terms are used in actual context. Wittgenstein’s performative sense. .

[12:34]

- Descriptive definitions: ordinary descriptions of things as they relate to us, especially in sensible ways.
- Explanatory/implicit definitions: deal with things as related amongst themselves.

[16:24]

- An exercise in self-appropriating the process of defining: Insects
- What is it? What does it ‘look like’ to me?
- Descriptive defining in terms of sensible traits: illustrations.

[20:54]

- Lonergan’s critique of conceptualism.
- Conceptualism as obscuring insight.

[23:20]

- What is conceptualism?
- Priority of inquiry and insight: changes how we approach reality of non-sensible
- Conceptualism and how it evolved. Insights expressed in concepts.
- Why Lonergan starts with mathematical insights.

[33:24]

- Lonergan proposes a shift to explanatory definition.
- Another exercise in self-appropriating the process of explanatory defining: Geometrical figure.
- Descriptive versus explanatory defining.
  - Science is often said to impoverish experience through abstractions.
  - Yet Lonergan speaks of an “enriching abstraction” that adds to our experience.

[38:45-45:00±]

Continuation of the defining exercise.

[45:10]

- Explanatory defining is in relation to other things.

[45:46]

- Lonergan does not privilege explanatory or scientific insights. Descriptive and nominal definitions involve different kinds of insights.

[47:30]

- Science is about relating, about adding intelligibility to experience.
- The explanatory definitions of science transcend our own interests and concerns.

[48:02]

- Student question about regarding the relationships of imagining, understanding, and explanatory defining.  
— Mathematicians can imagine without having to eventually return to sensations. Scientists use sensations, but must ultimately return to sensations. In neither case can thinking and understanding be bound by sense or imagination .

[51:11]

- Student question regarding going from the general to the particular, the conceptualist approach, the role of inquiry.  
— Insights of application to concrete situation are needed. This is not a mechanical process, but a creative and subtle one.
- Student question on whether Lonergan agreed with the conceptualist definition of abstraction.  
— No. Arriving at concepts requires insights. In conceptualism, the process of arriving at concepts is not accounted for.

[58:49]

- Student question as to whether mental disorders may be due to a disruption of the process of insight.  
— Mental illness is indeed a blockage of insight; see Chapter 6.
- Student question as to whether empirical definitions are always in a state of conceptual flux, subject to revision.  
— Not exactly; incorrect concepts are revised, by means of corrective insights. Examples from biology.

[1:06:17]

- Student question on role of imagining and images in definition.  
— The role of inquiry in guiding imagining toward understanding and defining.

[1:09:30]

- Another exercise in self-appropriating explanatory defining: Conic sections.
- Student question about exposure to universals and whether definitions can be wrong.  
— There is so much to be understood about any actual image or entity, that no one concept or definition exhausts all of its intelligibility.

[1:15:06]

- Further illustrations of explanatory definition as relating things to each another.