

Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 4, Part II: Chapter 14: “The Method of Metaphysics”

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- Basic Positions & Counterpositions, continued.
- Basic positions are the correct answers to the three questions about cognitional fact, objectivity, and what is known (i.e., being and proportionate being) in exercising cognitional structure.
- The basic positions accept knowledge about the whole of proportionate being insofar as this knowledge is underpinned by the affirmation of one’s own structure of cognition.
- Self-appropriation becomes the basis for discerning and interpreting what philosophers and others say, for their coherence or incoherence with the basic positions.

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- Dialectic in Metaphysical and the Whole.
- Philosophy seems never to reach final conclusions, unlike other disciplines.
- Yet the many disparate philosophies may all contribute to “some basic yet polymorphic fact...”
- Metaphysics as dialectical method helps identify the wider significance of a philosopher’s thought.

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- The Hermeneutics of Generosity and Spiritual Exercises.
- How the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola were important for Lonergan: They are meant to lead to true spiritual freedom, which has to be ‘won back.’
- This is also what Lonergan’s exercises of self-appropriation are meant to be.
- And as with the director of the Ignatian exercises, for the good of *both* the metaphysician and the object of inquiry, he or she must be more ready to ‘save the proposition’ and develop or reverse it than ‘condemn’ it.
- The dialectical method of metaphysics is *not* a weapon to be used to beat down counterpositions.
- Dialectical method is hard; reversing positions (not just refuting propositions) is hard.
- Counterpositions are *performative* incoherences, not merely logical ones (for example, this occurs in both Hume and Kant).

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- Student question about how the spiritual exercises and how the pure desire to know relates to other desires, and the discernment of spirits. Are humans so able to make judgments based on reason alone? Does this mean complete, clean break from all feelings?
 - The goal is to integrate passions and give them an appropriate role, neither to leave them aside nor to let them take over. We saw how dramatic pattern requires that our insights be linked with affects, in chapter 6. Feelings are to be integrated, not ignored and not left to blindly interfere. Lonergan’s dialectic differs from Hegel’s. Lonergan thought that Hegel included under one dialectic several different processes that should be distinguished: natural changes, the emergence of higher viewpoints, and also the purely human consequences that result from conflicts between the pure desire and forces that oppose it. Lonergan reserves the term “dialectic” for the latter alone.

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- Moreover, the desire to know is not analogous to our other desires; it is enduring, but not so powerful. The other desires have limited objectives; but the *detached* desire to know is *attached* to everything, to *being*

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- Further question about whether Lonergan's language is a means of fostering disinterested desire?
 - The suggestion that there is a deliberateness and method to the impenetrability of Lonergan's writing an interesting one.

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- The Hermeneutics of Generosity, continued.
- Lonergan's hermeneutics of generosity applies to the contradictions in all human affairs, not just to the writings of philosophers.
- Lonergan's dialectic of generosity becomes methodical through his stress on inverse insights in the philosophical process.

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- Metaphysics as heuristic: What is meant by an integral heuristic structure?
- A heuristic notion is the notion of an unknown content, and it is determined by anticipation of the kind of act that makes the unknown become known; assembled together these notions form a heuristic structure.
- An *integral* heuristic structure is the *ordered* set of *all* heuristic notions.

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- Discussion as to why the definition of proportionate being fulfills the definition of *a* heuristic structure, but not of the *integral* heuristic structure.
- Yet it is "not an instance of an *integral* heuristic structure, for it doesn't exhaust the resources of the human mind in anticipating what it is to know."
- What "resources of the human mind" are not explicitly included in the definition of proportionate being? What more is needed?
- Are there any heuristic notions not mentioned in the definition of proportionate being?
- Answers proposed in the next class (Lecture 5, Part I, Chapter 15, "The Elements of Metaphysics.")

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- The Implementation of Metaphysics.
- Metaphysics does not undertake to meddle with the methods of other disciplines in knowing; but strives to reverse their counterpositions and 'work them into coherence' by discerning in them the concrete prolongation of its own integral heuristic structure.
- Metaphysics, Science and Culture: due to egotistical, group and general biases, extra-scientific content enters science, and common sense also includes common nonsense; the role of the metaphysics is to help distinguish any biased content from contents that do conform to the integral heuristic structure.
- Metaphysics engages common sense and scientific culture in a dialogue, the tools of which are derived from self-appropriation.
- But this is only possible for a self-appropriated metaphysician who has undertaken the difficult work of recognizing and reversing her or his own biases.
- An example to reflect upon for next week: How would a self-appropriated metaphysician view the statement "There is a gene for everything..."?

End of Part II