

Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 5, Part I: Chapter 15: “The Element of Metaphysics”

[0:00]

- Review of the Notion of Metaphysics as Heuristic and Dialectical.
- Radical openness of Lonergan’s notion of metaphysics
- Illustration of this notion with the statement “There is a gene for everything.”
- Metaphysics asks what can be known here and now about the future explanation of the whole of proportionate being.

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- Student question about knowing the whole of proportionate being versus knowing all of being.
 - Distinction between what can be known of being through the totality of possible human experience, understanding and judgment, versus knowing what is to be known as the totality of answers to all questions for intelligence and reasonableness.
 - In other words, this leaves open whether there may be questions about realities for which there are no correlative elements of direct human experience.
 - Elaboration. Data on religious experience, for example, has to do with humans’ experiences of themselves, but not experiences of God as such.

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- The difference between an *integral* heuristic structure and a heuristic structure.
- The definition of proportionate being as ‘that which is to be known’ through the totality of human experience is a heuristic structure, but not the integral heuristic structure.
- What then, is missing from the definition of proportionate being?
- It is *an* heuristic structure; why is it not *the integral* heuristic structure?
- What is included in this notion of an integral heuristic structure of proportionate being?
- Class discussion of what is included: empirical science; commonsense; indirect knowledge of other’s direct experiences; what is to be known about all *possible* human experiences (for example, I *ask* about what a hockey game is, even if I don’t play).
- What is included is knowledge from all fields, *purged* of biases and counterpositions.
- Discussion of knowing about realities of which one has direct as well as indirect experiences, and the implications for an objective historical science.

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- Additional things included in the definition of proportionate being: perfect circle and other non-imaginable realities referenced by explanatory definitions.
- Relations among what is known by different people out of their different experiences; the relations among the sciences, and among science and commonsense are also included under the integral structure of proportionate being.

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- Student question about how we can know when the whole of proportionate being is known.
 - Can only know when all of proportionate being is known, is when there are no further pertinent questions.
 - The point is, something can be said about the structure of the whole, even without knowing everything about proportionate being.
 - Lonergan is not too subtly rebuking Kant’s position that noumenal reality is an unknowable, inaccessible regulative idea.

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- Again, why isn't the definition of proportionate being a complete account of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being?
 - Student question for clarification of what this question is asking about, and response.
 - Student suggestion that what is missing from the definition but is intended in the integral heuristic structure are the noetic dimensions – the noetic self as a knower and performer (over and above sense perception). But those dimensions *are* intended in the definition, since there are also the experiences of the data of consciousness, and all that is to be understood and affirmed about those (e.g., “self-affirmation” and “re-duplication of the structure”).
 - The subject-object division takes place within proportionate being, and thus the knowing self and the self's knowing are parts of proportionate being.
 - “Somehow finality is left out.”
 - Suggestion that the problem is that the definition of proportionate being is vulnerable to change.

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- Student question about whether if a person knew everything about everything about proportionate being, would they still not be God?
 - This hypothetical person would not be a metaphysician, would not be doing metaphysics, which asks about what can be known about the whole *prior* to knowing everything about proportionate being.
 - But such a hypothetical person would still not be God, because there are things still not known to such a person.

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- Metaphysics is as rich as possible an account we can give about the whole prior to complete knowledge of all of proportionate being.
- Lonergan is implying that the definition of proportionate being does not yet achieve the full richness that is possible for such an account.
- Further discussion of what is missing from definition of proportionate being:
 - Higher viewpoints, inquiry about inquiry itself (related to finality), inverse insights, certain heuristic notions (classical, statistical, genetic, dialectical) – none of these are *explicitly* mentioned in the definition of proportionate being. So the definition does not explicitly include their implications for filling out the integral structure.
 - Also missing: The “Notion” of a Thing and what it means to understand a thing
 - Likewise, explanatory genera and species

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- Chapter 15 is where Lonergan lays out the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being, though he never explicitly tells the reader that is what he is doing in this chapter.
- The various grounds of the four heuristic methods – classical, statistical, dialectical, and genetic – and the argument that there are four and only four.
- Elaboration of how the four heuristic structures (classical, statistical, genetic, dialectical) interact.
- Lonergan claims that these four methods, once integrated with one another, are able to comprehend the totality of proportionate being
- A claim he will later expand and modify so as to so more adequately give an account of the intergral heuristic structure required to anticipate the knowing of all human reality. (See *Method and Theology*. Which could have been called “Method of Human Studies.”)

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- Student request for an example of a dialectical phenomenon that is not directly intelligible.
 - Discussion of the financial crisis: how credit must be grounded in intelligible expectations of future results. How unintelligent and unreasonable were the expectations of the housing market banks to take a different approach to risk, and the results.
 - Ignoring questions and insights creates unintelligible transitions from one system to another.

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- The Four Basic Kinds of Scientific Heuristic Methods:
- The combination of the first two methods (classical and statistical) gives emergent probability, a *limited kind of* integral heuristic structure, because it integrates two other heuristic structures.
- Moreover, these two methods constitute the worldview or the metaphysics consistent with these practices of modern science.
- Adding the final two methods will give a still fuller integral heuristic structure of proportionate being (i.e., a *generalized* emergent probability).
- Clarification of heuristic method in relation to heuristic notion: “Methods are heuristic notions put on their feet.”

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- Finality.
- The generalized emergent probability situates things in their emergent order, i.e. within finality.
- One does not really know a thing, until one knows where it sits in finality.
- Definition of finality: “upwardly but indeterminately directed dynamism towards an ever fuller realization of being.”
- Diagram of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being: from the big bang through systematic processes, developmental processes, and dialectical processes.
- The whole is dynamic, it is a structured dynamic of stages and components.

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- Student question about the differences between finality, emergent probability and integral heuristic structure.
 - Finality is the most fundamental aspect of the real.
 - The integral heuristic structure of proportionate being is the anticipation of what it would be to know finality.
 - Emergent probability is a subset or partial fulfillment of the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being; it is partial insofar as it cannot fully account for life and development.
 - Hence needs to be complemented by a generalized emergent probability that incorporates genetic (and dialectical) methods.
 - Discussion of generalized emergent probability and its incorporation of the latter.

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- The Two Big Points of Chapter 15:
 - (1) The whole in proportionate being is finality
 - (2) The implications of (1) for self-appropriation

[1:22:20]

- Finality is upwardly directed but not deterministic; not a nice straight line of progress; it includes dead ends and blind alleys.
- Difference between finality and some common ideas about final causality.
- Finality is not a pull exerted by the future on the present (this is actually efficient causality); this is one of the counterpositions Lonergan had to contend with.
- Finality is what is being realized by present motion in its fullness.
- Lonergan does not explicitly deal with what he thinks is the proper understanding of final causality until Chapter 19.
- The final cause (properly understood) of a growing child is his or her *whole life*, i.e. the whole series of their acts over their lifetime or in history.
- But to talk about finality, don't we need to know how things will turn out?
- Is the final cause of the acorn to be an oak? Or to be dinner for a squirrel?
- The final cause of the acorn, or the whole universe, universe has to do with its *internal dynamics*, not the end product.

End of Part I.