

Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 6, Part II: Chapter 15: “The Element of Metaphysics”, continued: Explanatory Potency, Form & Act; Development & Genetic Method

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- Metaphysical Elements:
 - Lonergan derived the terms and the basic structure from Aquinas, although Lonergan is more rigorous in his use of each term.
 - Definitions of Potency, Form, and Act.
 - The various meanings of ‘is’ and ‘real’: examples of metaphysical conundrums.
- Lonergan provides a rich framework for approaching such conundrums about the various senses of “to be” – the real.
- The fullest sense of ‘to be’ is reached in the affirmative judgment; but because it affirms borrowed contents, form and potency, central and conjugate, *are*, therefore in some sense – *real* in some sense.

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Metaphysics of Potency.

- Discussion of Lonergan’s definition of potency (p. 456)
- “in fully explanatory knowledge” – why?
- “by an intellectually patterned experience” – why?
- “of the empirical residue.” – why?
- In the intellectual patterning of experience, no experience is isolated; every experience in that pattern is actually or potentially related to what is other than itself.
- The empirical residue is the radical ground of *difference*.
- Illustrated in the different stages of the evolution of the universe from the Big Bang onward.
- Empirical residue as the condition of possibility of intelligible correlations and schemes of recurrence.

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- Potency & Finality
 - Potency is also known by *intellectual patterning experience* of the empirical residue.
 - The world of our experience is always, in the first instance, radically disconnected; but when our insights discovering the forms, that the disconnectedness is discovered to have been *potentially* able to become connected.
 - In the intellectual pattern, we are seeking in which or what connectedness the potency can participate.
- Lonergan claims: “The dynamic orientation of experience, no less than the experience itself has its counterpart in proportionate being.” (471<445>).
- Finality is the dynamic, real, objective counterpart of the intellectual patterning of experience..
 - Our experiencing is already caught up in a dynamism; and when we affirm the understanding of that experiencing, we are also affirming the dynamic orientation of that experiencing as a constituent of reality.

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- Diagram of Ontological Structure revisited.
- There is always something of the dynamic orientation of some difference (empirical residue) that is affirmed to be real in any of our affirmations.
- So potency is the ground of finality – what makes finality be real.

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- Form:

- As with potency and act, form is what would be known in fully explanatory knowledge.
- *Fully* explanatory means in *all* their relations to one another; resulting from all questions that can be asked about anything.
- But if one wants to understand specific forms, stop being a philosopher and get into the hard work of being a scientist in search of understanding how things are related.
- Metaphysics is not about specific forms, but about the “*whole in proportionate being*” – the ontological structure in which specific forms are concretely and actually related to one another.
- Revisit explanatory relations: the difference between experiential and explanatory conjugates: conjugate – conjugal, conjoined; conjoined to an individual’s acts of experiencing or conjoined to other entities in virtue of the conjugates explanatorily conjoined.
- Examples of experiential conjugates: colors, sounds, force.
- The meaning of experiential conjugates comes from human experience – which always changes. Experiential conjugates are known by our senses; they the terms in descriptive relations.

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- Lonergan thought that his method of metaphysics could bring an end to “mere disputation” and the key to that possibility is focusing metaphysics on the explanatory relations (and hence form in the explanatory sense).
- How misconceptions of explanatory knowledge can lead to pseudo-metaphysics, which makes claims about what is real and not real, not on the basis of the intelligible, but on the basis of the experiential.
- It is in striving toward explanatory understanding that the crucial difference between the contents of experience and the contents of understanding emerge with the greatest clarity.
- Does explanatory knowledge include descriptive knowledge? How do descriptive statements fit into the explanatory whole of knowledge? What is lost when they are incorporated?
- Nothing of the richness of experiencing is lost when everything is related to everything else; it gets incorporated into something larger.
- How something is related “to me” is situated in a complicated network of relation of “me” to all other things. If one wishes to fully understand how something “looks to me,” one has to also understand how “me” is related to everything else.
- Return again to potency: The givenness of differences is to be understood in the context of how everything is related to everything else. Difference is recognized as not merely different, but also as incomplete, but without as yet understanding what is missing.
- Our unrestricted inquiry is a quasi-knowledge of merely empirical difference as not merely empirical difference, but part of some kind of intelligible relatedness.
- We have an innate longing for knowing what it's all about, without knowing the final answer.

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- Students’ questions: If we experience manifold differences, but do not yet grasp their intelligibility, does that mean we cannot affirm its existence? When we reach full intelligibility, will empirical residue cease to exist?
 - Ultimately, whatever we do affirm and know, always includes something with the potentiality to become that intelligibility. The ontology of it is *potency*. Empirical residue never ceases to exist for us, but it ceases to be ‘mere difference’; it is realized to be “disposed difference.”

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- Metaphysics as Explanatory:
- Descriptive relations do not go away, but become more deeply embedded and enriched.

- Form is the formulation of the intelligible component in human knowledge, and captures the full relatedness of that relation (which descriptiveness did not fully grasp).
- Example of Newton's gravitational force law. Force is no longer an experiential conjugate, but a term in a network of relations to be understood.
- The meaning of explanatory conjugates is determined by understanding.

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- Act:
- Act is the component of proportionate being known by uttering the virtually unconditioned 'yes' of reasonable judgment – in response to the question "Is?" – "Yes" therefore means "is", being.
- Central act = existence; Conjugate act = event or occurrence.

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- Development and Genetic Method
- The Four Principles of Development: Emergence, Correspondence, Finality and Development.
- The Scissors Metaphor and Genetic Method
- The heuristic notion of development guides genetic method
- The Genetic Method "determines the course of a development by the scissors-like action of both particular and general procedures." (486<461>))
- Example of Driesch's sea-urchin experiments, which threw mechanistic explanations into question.
- The genetic heuristic method tries to answer the question, "What is the development?"
- The upper blade and lower blade converge to bring the insight that grasps the development.

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- Heuristic definition of explanatory development and discussion of its meaning.
- Development is a sequence of higher *integrations*
- A higher integration is a fairly complex scheme of recurrence.
- Illustrated by asking: What is a cell? What is a gene?
- A metaphysical answer to this question addresses the cell's relations and its role within a larger context.
- A cell is a scheme of chemical events, is a higher integration of chemical conjugate acts.
- This is talking about a cell in an explanatory, vs. a descriptive fashion.
- In developments, higher integrations do not remain stable; they are self-destabilizing and self-modifying.
- "Specifying the Operator" means identifying that which does the transforming.
- The ways in which the higher integration, the cell, is transforming its own chemical constituents, so as to undermine its own continuation, but to prepare for a new kind of higher integration.
- In developing organisms, cells change their chemical makeup to set the conditions of emergence of new, more differentiated schemes of recurrence. It calls forth its own replacement.
- In developing entities, such transformations happen not just once, but in *sequences* of intelligibly related transformations that exhibit general characteristic intelligible patterns.

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- Illustration of Sea Urchin Embryology: the redistribution of chemical reactions influences the conditions for emergence in different areas of the organism's body.

End of Part II.