

Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 7, Part I: Chapter 16: “Metaphysics as Science.”

[0:00]

- Metaphysics as Science.
- Overview of the Table of Contents of Chapter 16.
- What are the contexts for this chapter?
- Chapter 16 was written against a “manual” tradition of scholastic metaphysics.

[5:55]

- How the need for method in metaphysics arose out of medieval theology; namely, the problem of grace and freedom.
- Discussion of the nature of that problem.
- Freedom as a gift (*gratia*) from God: How can there be freedom if grace is the cause of our good actions?
- Further distinctions and relations in Christology and Trinitarian Theology.
- By Lonergan’s time, that achievement in metaphysics had degenerated into an abstract manualist tradition.

[16:00]

Subsequent Contexts:

- Lonergan's account of distinction, relation and unity (grounded in self-appropriation) contributes to a methodical derivation (previously lacking) of the definitions used in traditional metaphysics.
- The manualist tradition was taught to Descartes and Heidegger, for example, and was the source of their criticisms.
- The impact of modern science upon metaphysics after Aquinas.
- The medieval distinction between the order of faith and the order of reason gave reason its autonomy while preserving the order of faith without usurping the order of faith.
- Lonergan re-establishes the grounds for Aquinas’ earlier metaphysics, while also bringing it into harmony with modern science.
- As a result, has potential to address issues arising in the modern and post-modern critiques of metaphysics

[20:50]

- In order to make treatment of the chapter manageable, we will concentrate on selected key issues from the chapter: unity; intelligibility of being; method; metaphysics and science; real distinctions and real relations (different order than Lonergan’s treatments).

[23:30]

- The unity of the universe in terms of its actual unity, its formal unity, and its potential unity.
- Proportionate being = the universe
- Actual unity = actual unfolding of emergent probability
- Formal unity = successive, irreducible levels of higher explanatory genera and their species (specific) conjugate forms – a formal unity that is grounded in the self-appropriation of the intelligible relations between successive higher viewpoints
- Potential unity grounded in multiplicity of merely given successions and conjunctions

[27:48]

- A closer look at the Potential Unity of the Universe:
- The possibility and problem of intelligible relations set by the merely coincidental
- Not just empty coincidence, but coincidence full of potential
- Examples: a junk yard; atoms or bacteria or insects in the universe as multitudes with potential
 - potential in the sense of a problem seeking a solution to make something intelligible out of the coincidences
- The successive transpositions of the problem of the coincidental to higher levels
 - Example of planetary formations
- The realization of possible solutions – emergences of schemes of recurrence and emergence of developing sequences; i.e., intelligently self-transforming schemes of occurrence.

[33:26]

- The solutions are unifications (schemes, developments, things) but are always limited in extent.
- Example of stellar formation and explosion cycles.
- The unity of the universe is *potential*, *formal* and *actual*; but the underlying potential unity is the potentiality of the merely coincidental as the fertile ground for the emergence of something more systematic, more organized, and more developmental.

[35:07]

- Student question about term ‘adjustable’.
 - Discussion of how combinations of conjugate forms at higher genera are capable of more complex combination that can operate under a wider range of conditions than at lower level genera; for example, there is a greater range of operation of schemes as one moves from atomic to chemical to living forms.

[39:15]

- Potential Unity and Finality.
- Potency is known by the intellectually patterned experience of empirical residue
- Intellectually patterned experience has a dynamic orientation – because it caught up in the throes of unrestricted inquiry
- The dynamic orientation has its counterpart in proportionate being = reality of finality
 - Examples: how we can be overwhelmed and feel awe at the immensity or diversity of particulars; i.e., crowds of people, the vastness of space, the number of beetles, the duration of history, grains of dust.
- Such is our experience of the intellectual patterning of the merely empirical residue, of merely empirical differences.
- An experience of coincidence as more than coincidence – empirical residue as problem and potential
- The empirical residue poses a problem for us insofar as we seek to explain it.
- The actual unity of the universe is the universe working out an answer to that problem.

[48:30]

- Student question about use of statistics to discern difference of coincidence from pattern.
 - Discussion of the normativity of probability as an intelligible ordering, and how this differs from the ordering of events into systems and into developing systems.

[50:38]

- Student question about how finality applies to a particular thing, for instance a rose; does the particular thing have a finality.
 - Finality applied to specific natural entities is distinct from how it applies to human beings or to the whole universe; but the rose has a limited developmental finality, and also plays a part in the finality of the universe.

[55:45]

- The non-countable differences in empirical residue and how it relates to the continuity of space and time.

[57:53]

- The displacement of the merely coincidental to ever higher generic levels.
- “The merely coincidental becomes space-time...” the way the universe is structured depends on how energy and momentum are arrayed in space and time (p. 533-534), i.e., how they are merely empirically given.
- How this random residual givenness is displaced to the level of physical, then to the level of chemical; then these are further organized into organic coincidental arrays, and finally raised to the psychic level.
- This account of unity of the proportionate universe doesn’t actually specify the actual or formal unity of the universe, but the potential unity of it.
- Finality is exactly this process of the universe working out what its unity is.
- One might say that the universe is simply not yet united; but we are witnessing the emergence of such a unity.

[1:05:53]

- Student question, struggling to understand how the higher levels of integration are not just organizations of the same, basic reality of physical primordial stuff, matter, prime potency, rather than talking about being itself.
 - Discussion of potency with respect to a higher explanatory genus.
 - How the conjugate acts at the lower level become the potencies for the next level up.
 - Example of how energetic electrons eventually become biologically useful. How the same electron is a conjugate act for physics and a conjugate potency for biology. In other words, the electronic event is the condition of possibility of a living system.

[1:10:18]

- The Unity of the Human
- Lonergan’s treatment of the unity of the universe seems indirect in comparison to his treatment of the unity of the human
- The unity of the universe is primarily treated heuristically, from the viewpoint of its potential unity.
- By contrast, Lonergan forcefully declares: “Man *is* one.”

End of Part I.