

Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 8, Part I: Chapter 16: The Intrinsic Intelligibility of Being, and Spiritual Being

[0:00]

- Recapitulation of highlights from Chapter 16.
- Being is intrinsically intelligible:
- Lonergan argues that potency, form, and act, the hierarchy of explanatory genera, and the finality of the universe true of reality, and not only to our knowing of it?
- But the prior argument is that intelligibility is intrinsic to being as such.

[4:42]

- That being is *intelligible*:
- The meaning of ‘intelligibility’: what is to be known in understanding.
- But to truly comprehend this meaning of intelligibility is not easy.
- One of the reasons that Lonergan begins *Insight* with such an intensive focus on modern science – where the distinction between the sensible/imaginable vs. the intelligible is most pronounced.
- Visual and intelligible aspects are difficult to distinguish in ordinary experience – where the phantasm and the insight so easily blend together.
- Modern physics forces upon us insights on us that defy imaginative representation. Illustration of impossibility of imagining the curvature of 3-dimensional of space (vs. imagining a curved 2-dimensional surface in a 3-dimensional space). But it is possible to *understand* it, because it is intelligible even though not imaginable.
- That being is *intelligible* means that being is *constituted* by what it is that understanding understands.

[13:34]

- The *intrinsic* intelligibility of being:
- After Kant, philosophers speak of the distinction between intuitive content, and empty formalism – the kind of formalism which has no content until sensible/imaginary data are added to it.
- By contrast, Lonergan claims that intelligibility is not empty formalism, but is a further content all its own – a content that comes to us only insofar as we understand. This content is not merely subjective but intrinsic to what we know.

[17:10]

- The argument for the intrinsic intelligibility of being:
- Because being is the objective of the pure desire to know, it follows that intelligibility is intrinsic to being.
- Why does the intrinsic intelligibility of being follow from the definition of being?
- Discussion.
- Intellectual conversion consists in no longer taking reality to be the ‘already out there now,’ but taking it to be intrinsically intelligible.
- Further discussion; various student proposals.

[24:23]

- Student question about why the data of consciousness and sense data can be legitimately equated. So “why does the fact that this method [cognitional structure] works on the data of consciousness mean that it will work on the data of sense?”

- Indeed, the data of consciousness is not the same as the data of sense. The second part of the question is equivalent to how do we know that intelligibility is intrinsic to what we know about the data of sense?
- Student question: Might one say, ‘If I know how I know, then I know what I am?’
 - Discussion of the difference between affirming oneself *as* knower, vs. knowing all that there is to know about oneself.
 - Difference between knowing oneself as intelligible, and knowing that all that is is intelligible.
 - Further discussion of the possibility of total self-knowledge.

[29:15]

- Resumption of the discussion:
- Student proposal: Orientation toward the world questioning about everything, if we can ask questions about ourselves, and know ourselves as intelligible and real.
- Reason why *we* are intelligible is because the world is intelligible.
- Why is the world intelligible?
- We make judgments that affirm the ‘isness’ of ‘what is’, i.e., the being of the intelligibility known in the insight that you affirm.
- Whenever we reasonably affirm, we affirm the reality of the intelligibility about which we have asked, “Is it?”
- We have an *unrestricted* desire for knowing all the questions for judgment; the “is it so” questions.
- But all of those “is?” questions are about some intelligibility; so all the true affirmations are affirmations of the reality of intelligibilities.
- Hence, all being is intelligible.

[33:22]

- Student question about how being, which is intrinsically intelligible but not imaginable, can be divorced from imaginable sense data.
 - Recall the distinction between being and proportionate being; only *proportionate* being is defined as what is to be known by *possible* human experience, understanding and judging
 - But according to Lonergan, human beings are constituted by self-transcendence, by an unrestricted, dynamic orientation of questioning that goes beyond all cultural, etc. limitations – but also beyond all *actual* and even all *possible* experience.
 - We ask for and seek virtually unconditioned judgments about what “is”, not just about what is true of human experiences.
 - Lonergan’s account of being is not restricted to human experiencing.
 - We can ask whether anything lies beyond human experience.
 - Lonergan’s argument is that intelligibility is intrinsic to *all* being, not just to being proportionate to human experiencing, understanding and judging.
 - The empirical residue and human sensibility do not directly enter into the question of the intelligibility of being.

[39:11]

- Student question as to whether being and reality are interchangeable terms?
 - For Lonergan being and reality are indeed the same.
 - Discussion of the intrinsic and the protean notions of being – the notions of reality that compete with the intrinsic notion of being rooted in unrestricted inquiry.

- Further discussion of unintelligibility of evil and whether it is a part of being (addressed in Ch. 20). Discussion of evil as what occurs for no good reason.

[44:40]

- Diagram of Ontological Structure: the most important step – the acid test for intellectual conversion.
- Being is not only intrinsically intelligible, but completely intelligible; there are no brute facts.
- In every judgment that ‘something is,’ the affirmation concerns the intelligible content.
- We can’t affirm anything that is not intelligible; you can have intelligibles that are not real – that are only hypothetical – but no realities that are not intelligible.

[49:10]

- Student question about the ‘*intrinsic*’ intelligibility of being.
 - Intrinsic means cannot exist without; intelligibility is not just contingently connected with being; being would *not be* if it were not intelligible.
- Student question about whether facticity is of only one type in a positive affirmation; does it mean the same in all instances.
 - Answer depends on the sections on real distinction and real relations.
 - The answer is both yes and no; further discussion.
 - All affirmations have the same “*proper*” content, but they are different since they are connected with their “*borrowed*” intelligible contents.
 - Is a computer real in the same way as a friendship? Discussion.

[54:08]

- Reiteration of the importance of the affirmation that the real is intrinsically intelligible. And the importance of realizing that the real is not the already out there now real.
 - Illustration by way of Plato’s dialogues, which are crafted to make the reader uncomfortable with the notion that the real is already out there now.

[57:20]

- Human Beings as Intrinsically Spiritual.
- In self-affirmation we affirm the intelligibility of ourselves as knowers (we affirm the intelligibility of performing the dynamism of cognitional structure).
- Difference between the kind of intelligibility known in the case of intelligent knowing, and the intelligibility of beings that are not also knowers and cannot also know themselves.
- This raises the question: Is Man’s central form material or spiritual?
- What does “spiritual” mean?
 - Discussion of spiritual as dealing with limits, as interiority, as the realm of faith, the realm of feelings, the connection to something transcendent.
 - Discussion of the literal vs. the figurative meanings of “interior”
 - The New Age sense of spiritual is a kind of ‘energy’; there is also a tendency to see the spiritual as invisible forces that play a role in events.
 - In Chapter 17, when Lonergan discusses myth and magic in the pejorative sense, he is talking about those who believe in such spiritual forces.

[1:06:50]

- What Lonergan means by “spiritual”:
- First approximation: “Intelligibility that is intelligent is spiritual.” (539).
- How radical a definition of spiritual this is.

- How it is different from spiritual as “inner consciousness.”
- How the spiritual seen as “intelligent” is different from logicism, rationalism. In rationalism, whatever is outside the rational system is not rational.
- Many spiritual movements are reactions against this idea of “rational”
- What Lonergan means by intelligent and rational consciousness is the flow of answers that come in response to unrestricted questioning.
- This is key to what Lonergan means by “spiritual” – that which is unrestricted, conditioned only by the unrestricted.

[1:12:48]

- Spiritual as apart from the empirical residue; the material as not without the empirical residue.
- The materialist sees matter as real – as space-filling stuff (see Descartes) – and as part of the ‘already out there now’
- But if the real is being as grasped intelligently and affirmed reasonably, then we need a new account of the material, as well as of the spiritual.
- Matter can no longer be regarded as space-filling stuff; it is rather whatever ‘cannot be’ without being in someplace and at sometime – in the sense of the empirical residuality of place and time.

[1:17:30]

- Extrinsic and intrinsic conditioning:
- Humans are obviously conditioned by experiences that are conditioned by space and time
- Yet we can also grasp intelligibilities that are not intrinsically present in space and time – e.g., covariant equations in relativity physics.
- Discussion of the sensible as sufficient but not necessary for understanding, paradoxically.
 - Example: once people have understood something, they can hypothetically apply it to situations they have never encountered in their sense experiences – situations that have no empirical residue.
 - Human intelligence has the capacity to organize material elements of the universe that would not be organized without it.
- This means that human acts of understanding are indeed extrinsically conditioned by the empirical residue, but are not intrinsically conditioned by space and time.

[1:23:10]

- Student question about the role of the imagination in the grasping of what isn’t present.
 - Discussion of the role of intelligence in fashioning imagination.
 - The various meaning of imagination (fusion of “image-as-image,” insights, and feelings)
 - Why the spiritual can take over the function of material, but not vice versa.

[1:26:15]

- Eliade on relationship between the extrinsic and the intrinsic conditioning of the human as spiritual.
- Mircea Eliade focused on the common structures of religious symbolism.
- For him, the spiritual fact, as a human fact, is conditioned by various factors (anatomy, physiology, language); a spiritual fact presupposes these other factors; yet these do not add up to the life of the spirit.
- Though humans are situated – are conditioned by physical and historical factors, they are not intrinsically conditioned by these conditions.

[1:31:30]

- Question about how one judges what is intelligent and what is not.
 - That's the core of self-affirmation; learning to discern the experience of understanding from the rest of your conscious experiences and data, i.e. to judge your own intelligence. Judging another's intelligence poses a whole separate problem: that of interpretation.

End of Part I