

**Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 9, Part I: Chapter 17: “Metaphysics, Mystery & Myth”
“Method in Theology, Ch. 2 Religion,” & “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion.”**

[0:00]

- Myth Revisited. The context of *Method in Theology*
- From Psychic Orientation to Religious Experience: the new emphasis on feelings.

[1:57]

- The question of God as the question about questioning as the new context for his account of religious experience.
- Self-transcendence as ‘going beyond’ should not be thought of in spatial terms
- Self-transcendence as going beyond through truly questioning; opens us to being in a way that is “beyond everything we already are”.

[4:51]

- Religious experience as the “basic” (or “proper”) fulfillment of our capacity for self-transcendence through questioning.
- He identifies that basic/proper fulfillment as the experience of *being-in-love with God* – unconditional/unrestricted being-in-love
- Discussion of the meaning of basic and proper
- As basic and proper fulfillment, religious experience brings peace to the ‘restlessness of our restless hearts’ – our unrestricted desire to know.
- But that is not the same as saying that religious experience answers all of our questions
- This fulfillment is not a product of our knowledge or choice
- As a dynamic state, it is conscious without being known, and is thus an experience of mystery.
- This basic fulfillment is a new kind of conscious activity, and there is not anything analogous to it in *Insight*
- This new conscious activity calls for interpretation, expression – just as new insights call for expression and formulation.

[15:22]

- Lonergan specifically referred to the works of Rudolf Otto and Paul Tillich concerning mystery in support of his interpretation of religious symbols in terms of the psychic operator corresponding to the known unknown.
- In *Method in Theology* he cites these same authors in connection with his interpretation of religious symbolism in terms of unconditional being-in-love (i.e., the “basic fulfillment” of human self-transcendence)
- This means he has changed his thinking about the approach to interpretation of religious expressions.
- The meaning of religious symbolism to be found no longer as the lower level psychic *auxiliary* or helper of the unrestricted intellectual and rational desire to know. Now it is a higher level conscious phenomenon which is the *fulfillment* of that desire.
- ‘Being in love’ as a basic fulfillment also brings a new kind of dynamism of its own into play, directing acts of consciousness in its own right.

[20:15]

- Student question about the final step on the level of questions of value, and when they are fulfilled so as to ground judgments of value.
 - Discussion of differences between the criteria for ethical judgment in *Insight* versus

those in *Method in Theology*.

[23:29]

- Student question about the falling in love as a level of consciousness, and whether it is a fourth level or some higher level.
 - Lonergan did indeed talk about a fifth level of consciousness that has to do with the unrestricted, total absorption of being in love. (This point is debated among Lonergan scholars.)
 - Discussion of the qualitative differences of different levels of consciousness.

[30:33]

- Student question about the undifferentiated and differentiated consciousness regarding being-in-love.
 - Answer in terms of “mediated immediacy”;
 - The world of immediacy vs. the world mediated by meaning
 - We mediate our relation to reality by means of our experiencing, perceiving, understanding, judging, etc.
 - But our immediate relation to reality comes through our unrestricted desire.
 - Yet he has the further notion that there is a return to immediacy that is mediated
 - E.g., people have to learn a great deal about art in order to return to the immediacy of the aesthetic pattern of experience. Likewise, spiritual exercises mediate the immediacy of being-in-love unconditionally
 - [It is in the mediated immediacy that religious experiences become differentiated.]

[35:40]

- Frederick Crowe’s “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion”:
- Crowe asks, “What does Lonergan mean by Religion?”
- Religious experience is not the language used to discuss it, but the ‘wordless prayer of mystics’ is mediated immediacy of religious experience.
- Religious experience is profoundly reasonable, because it is intimately related to truly unrestricted inquiry.
- Using language about religious experience one moves out of immediacy.
- So Lonergan in answer to “What is meant by religion [or religious experience]?” does not appeal to any particular institutional religion.

[41:19]

- There is a very specifically Christian mediation (superstructure) in the account of religious experience that Lonergan gives in *Method in Theology* – e.g. in his appeal to the phrase “love of God” and his citation of *Romans 5:5*.
- The word “love” means different things; Lonergan appeals to his Christian tradition to settle his meaning of the word.
- Lonergan also appeals to self-appropriation as a means of mediating and giving interpretation to the pure experience of being-in-love unconditionally – i.e., that religious experience is the basic fulfillment of something we come to know through self-appropriation.

[45:00]

- Whether these characterizations are correct and appropriate ways to interpret our religious experience is a question for hermeneutics.
- Yet such immediate phenomena are unconditioned, universal experiences and are found at the

heart of all religious traditions.

[47:04]

- Expressions of Religious Experience:
- Because religious experience is unconditional, therefore in itself it is ineffable – inexpressible.
- Difficulties of describing phenomena like religious experience, human love, and unconditional love.
- Descriptions, Incarnate Manifestations, Symbols, Artistic, Differentiated and Developed expressions.
- Student question about the possibility of explanatory expressions.
- In part Lonergan is contributing to interreligious dialogue – because it is unconditional, religious experience defies complete human description, hence every limited human description can be a contribution to understanding religious experience.

[52:48]

- Religious experience is first expressed by a spontaneous change of attitudes and behavior.
- It is subsequently expressed symbolically, in symbols evoking or flowing from religious experience.
- The new definition of symbol in *Method in Theology* and the new definition of religious symbol.
- Associating religious experience with its outward occasion another primordial way of expressing it
- Can lead to the mistake of regarding an object present in the associated outward occasion as the proper object of the religious experience itself.
- There is a birth or founding of sacred places when religious experience is expressed outwardly: these outward occasions are called ‘hierophanies.’
- Discussion of the manifold expressions of religious experience.

[1:00:36]

- These examples do not exhaust the ways in which religious experience and meaning can be expressed.
- The Word: any expression of religious meaning or religious value.
- As a Catholic theologian, Lonergan did hold that religious experience is an unconditional gift from a transcendent personal God, but acknowledges that this affirmation is not contained immediate religious experience itself.
- How Lonergan handles the charge that religious is inner human subjectivity: he recognizes the universal nature of religious experience while not reducing it to immanent subjectivity.

End Part II.