

## **Insight and Beyond**

Class 23, Part Two: March 24th 2010

### **Chapter 17: “Metaphysics, Mystery & Myth”**

*“Method in Theology”*, chapter four

**“Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion”**

**“Religious Experience and Religious Expression”**

### **Myth Revisited**

**“I have not been moved to change my mind about the first three chapters on metaphysics, i.e., on chapters 14, 15, 16. But in chapter 17 my usage of the word ‘myth’ is out of line with current usage. My contrast of mystery and myth was between symbolic expressions of positions and of counterpositions. It was perhaps justifiable in the context of *Insight*, but it is not going to be understood outside of it, so another mode of expression is desirable. “Further, the account of mystery has to be filled out with what chapter 4 of *Method in Theology* says about religious experience.”**

Bernard Lonergan, *“Insight Revisited,” A Second Collection, CWL 13, p. 231.*

Myth Revisited. The context of *Method in Theology*.

From Psychic Orientation to Religious Experience: the  
new emphasis on feelings.

Just to resume where we left off, I just wanted again to draw attention to this last remark by Lonergan that what he had to say about *mystery* and *symbol* in chapter seventeen of *Insight* (CWL 3, “**Metaphysics as Dialectic**,” pp. 553-617), he thought had to be filled out by his discussion of religious experience in *Method in Theology*.

**From *Insight* to  
*Method in Theology***  
**From Psychic Orientation  
to  
Religious Experience**

So *Method in Theology* was published in 1972, a good fifteen years after the publication of *Insight* in 1957, and an awful lot of thinking went on in between. There’s an excellent book by Ivo Coelo on Lonergan’s hermeneutics entitled *Hermeneutics and Method: A Study of the “Universal Viewpoint” in Bernard Lonergan*. In that work Coelo traces the development of Lonergan’s thinking about hermeneutics from the time of the publication of *Insight* through a number of lecture notes, and articles, and unpublished works, in that fifteen year period, to come to his account of interpretation that’s presented in *Method in Theology*. But *one of the things that also underwent change was his thinking about religious expressions and religious symbolism*. And the key to the change is his account of religious experience. Part of the change is a changed attitude about feelings as such; and we’ll have a chance to talk about that in the next couple of classes. And given the change in the way that he valued or evaluated the place of

feelings in human consciousness — it also affected the way he was going to think about religious experience.

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”.

### **Religious Experience**

**“Our questions for intelligence, for reflection, and for deliberation, constitute our capacity for self-transcendence.**

**That capacity becomes an actuality when one falls in love. Then one’s being become being-in-love.”** (*MiT*, p.105).

He opens up, as you know, the chapter, [chapter four “Religion” in \*Method in Theology\*, pp. 101-124](#), with what he calls the question about —”1 The question of God” (*MiT*, pp. 101-103); and it’s a question about questioning! We’ll come back to that when we look at chapter nineteen in *Insight* (*CWL* 3, “**General Transcendent Knowledge**”, pp. 657-708), and compare what he is doing in *Insight* to how he begins chapter four of *Method in Theology*. I mention that simply because his segue into talking about religious experience comes out of that discussion about why there are answers to questions.

And he focuses on “2 Self-Transcendence” (*MiT*, pp. 104-105). We’ve used the term before, but it doesn’t appear very frequently in *Insight* until we get to chapter nineteen (*CWL* 3, “**General Transcendent Knowledge**”, pp. 657-708). *But by self-transcendence, Lonergan means our capacity for questions of intelligence, for questions of reflection, and for deliberation.* I just want to dwell on that for a moment — it’s terribly important: this is how Lonergan thinks about transcendence. If you think of transcendence as going beyond, there’s a tendency to get stuck in a spatial metaphor: going from inside to outside, going from lower to higher, going from past to present, from present to future: somehow or other you’re caught within space and time by the metaphor of ‘beyond’.

*What Lonergan means by self-transcendence is our questioning; and remember the unique and peculiar quality of questions is that when there are genuine questions, when they are authentic questions, when they really are questions as questions, we are going beyond what we understand towards we know not what! As human beings, we can “think about what we can’t think about.” We have a known-unknownness! We are beyond ourselves! So if you think of yourself as constituted by all the decisions you’ve made, all the judgments you’ve made, all the insights you’ve had, all the experiences you’ve had, precisely as a questioner none of that will do! If it would, you wouldn’t have a question, or at best your questions would be trying to root around in the recesses of your memory about what you’ve forgotten. But in terribly important ways, every time we are in the throes of a true question, whether for reflection or for intelligence, we are beyond everything that we are. And that’s what human self-transcendence is all about, at least in Lonergan’s context!*

*Method in Theology*, Chapter Four.

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.

*I draw your attention to the fact that there is a new kind of question here.* It’s something we’ll look at again in more detail in the next couple of chapters, but because I decided to move

this portion of the reading material for the course up into this week's lesson, we can't exactly ignore it. *There's a new and distinct kind of question that we haven't talked about: **question for deliberation**. Deliberation means, what will I do? What am I to do? What should I do about it? What's the good of what I'm doing? Those are all questions for deliberation. They are, as Lonergan discovered after the publication of *Insight*, a distinct order and a distinct level of consciousness that is not reducible to the three **levels** that we talked about so far. That was not clear to him in *Insight*, and as we'll see, he tried to work out his ethics within the context of only three levels of consciousness, and three types of questions, and three contents of the activities of consciousness. The three fold distinct levels here becomes four as we get to *Method in Theology*. So our capacity is not only for the *What? the Why? and the How? Questions*, and now the *Is it so? questions*, but the *What's the good of? questions!* Then he makes the strong claim that our capacity for self-transcendence*

***“becomes an actuality when one falls in love. Then one's being becomes being-in-love.”*** (*MiT*, p. 105).

*This is his entry into a discussion of religious experience!*

### **Religious Experience**

**“As the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality.”** (*MiT*, p.105).

**“Just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfilment of that capacity,”** (*MiT*, p.106).

**“As the question of God is implicit in all our questioning, so being in love with God is the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality.”** (*MiT*, p.105).

Then a little bit later on the next page he says:

**“Just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfillment of that capacity.”** (*MiT*, p. 106).

Okay. Now let’s just back away from those statements for a moment, and reflect on this a little bit. We come to this chapter, ([chapter four “Religion”](#), *Method in Theology*, pp. 101-124) with certain understandings of the word ‘love’. It’s used early and often in this chapter. And as you read what Lonergan has to say — If you’ve read what Lonergan has to say in this chapter, you may have found yourself agreeing, or you may have found yourself disagreeing, with some of these kinds of statements.

*There is a kind of implicit definition that’s operating here. What Lonergan means by being in love, by being in love with God, by being in love in an unrestricted fashion, is that which stands as what he calls the basic fulfillment, or the proper fulfillment, of the whole thrust of our unrestricted inquiry, and to all the levels of inquiry, now including the level that has to do with deliberation and ethical value or failure to it.<sup>17</sup> So what love means is defined in terms of something that you are all now very familiar with. What love means is something which has a relationship to our unrestricted inquiry, our unrestricted desire.*

The words ‘**basic**’ and ‘**proper**’ are the fundamental words here. What exactly does it mean to talk about a basic fulfillment of our unrestricted desire to know, our unlimited intentionality, our unlimited thrust to self-transcendence? What does it mean to say you have a basic fulfillment? — because the word ‘basic’, and even the word ‘proper’ here, mean something and they don’t mean something!! *What they don’t mean is that we understand and know everything about everything. This kind of fulfillment that he’s talking about is not the fulfillment of having all of our questions for insight, all of our questions for reflection or judgment, and all of our questions for deliberation answered, based on the meaning! But somehow or other, there*

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<sup>17</sup> The final words in this sentence are conjecture by the transcriber.

*is something that comes as a basic fulfillment! And whatever it means for something to be the basic fulfillment of our intentionality, that's what Lonergan is going to say is meant by love, or more precisely, by unrestricted or unconditional love!*

Now we come to those pages and those sentences with all kinds of associations from other places about the meaning of 'love'. And I want to stop and dwell on this, because this is what Lonergan is going to mean by love here. It clearly is not accidental in choosing that word! And many of the things that you — perhaps all of the things that you would understand by that term are in fact what he means by the basic fulfillment. But importantly, he's not talking about being in love in an unrestricted fashion as defined by a dictionary or as defined by some other set of meanings. They are defined implicitly by their relationship to unrestricted intentionality.

### **Religious Experience**

**“That fulfilment is not the product of our knowledge and choice.”**

**“To say that this dynamic state is conscious is not to say that it is known. For consciousness is just experience.... Because the dynamic state is conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery.”**

*(Method in Theology, p. 106).*

(Note: same references to R. Otto and P. Tillich as in *Insight*).

He is emphatic that the fulfillment is not a product of our knowledge and choice. But it is experienced in some fashion as fulfillment; that which comes about when people are anxious

and desirous of where their unrestricted intentionality is leading them, and they have then an experience of being basically fulfilled. He describes it as a dynamic state.

**“To say that this dynamic state is conscious is not to say that it is known. For consciousness is just experience. ... Because the dynamic state is conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery.”** (MiT, p. 106).

So this is clearly where Lonergan is going to move, or is moving in his discussion of mystery. *It's an experience of unlimitedness, of unrestrictedness, of unconditionality, not something that's achieved by any human effort, but nevertheless is experienced as a basic fulfillment of our unrestricted intentionality, but not being known.* It's an experience, and as experience it invites inquiry, it invites us to try to understand what it's all about, but as experience it's just experienced.

Now, there isn't anything like that in *Insight*; there are things that approximate to it, there are things that you can say he's converging towards this in various places. But really there is nothing like this! It's a distinct kind of conscious activity that hasn't been discussed in any place in our reading of *Insight* up until now; and it's not really discussed in any place in *Insight*. It's a new kind of conscious activity; and just like when we have an insight, we have the experience of having an insight. And in the beginning of this class, you were invited and encouraged and in some cases exhorted to heighten your awareness of the experience of 'insighting', of having insights, and then to wonder about that: Is this experience that I'm having, is it to be understood according to the words that Lonergan has been putting down on the page about insights? Or not? *Something similar is going on here. So in other words, when we have an insight, until you've got the language to talk about it, it's just an experience that needs an interpretation;* so also the experience that Lonergan is calling here *the basic fulfillment of human self-transcendence, of the thrust of our intentionality*, that too is just an experience and it could mean just about anything. *But it is an experience, and it's experience as bringing, as he says, peace and joy and gentleness and kindness; peace, primarily, because the restlessness of our restless hearts becomes some basic objective to its desiring. So the experience of peace is that there's some fundamental kind of an answer to what we've been anxiously desiring and questing after.*

Lonerger 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 the 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.

But even to say that is to go beyond the experience as experience and to talk about it, to use the word ‘peace’ in its regard, for example. Now I — down at the bottom of the slide I said: “Note the references to Otto and Tillich.”<sup>18</sup> So on page 106 in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan says this:

**“To say this dynamic state is conscious is not to say that it is known. For consciousness is just experience, but**

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<sup>18</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, London: Oxford, 1923. Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church, Quaestiones disputatae* 12, Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964, pp. 131 ff.

knowledge is a compound of experience, understanding, and judging. Because the dynamic state is conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery. Because it is being in love, the mystery is not merely attractive but fascinating; to it one belongs; by it one is possessed. Because it is an unmeasured love, the mystery evokes awe.” (*MiT*, p. 106).

It’s an unmeasured love because it’s a basic response to an unmeasured desire.

“Of itself, then, inasmuch as it is conscious without being known, the gift of God’s love is an experience of the holy, of Rudolf Otto’s *mysterium fascinans et tremendum*. It is what Paul Tillich named a being grasped by ultimate concern. It corresponds to St Ignatius Loyola’s consolation that has no cause, as expounded by Karl Rahner.” (*MiT*, p. 106).

Lonergan begins the section on “Metaphysics, Mystery, and Myth” (*CWL* 3, pp. 554-572) with the following comments:

“Myth is a prominent category in Comte’s notion of three stages in man’s development, in Schelling’s later philosophy, in E. Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, in P. Tillich’s views on religion and theology, in R. Bultmann’s principles of New Testament interpretation. Mystery is a notion that plays a fundamental role in the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel.” (*CWL* 3, pp. 554-555).

And then at [the bottom of p.555](#), he says:

“Nor is this merely a theoretical conclusion, as R. Otto’s study of the nonrational element in the *Idea of the Holy* rather abundantly indicates.” (*CWL* 3, p. 555).

So notice what's happened here: Lonergan in *Insight* was looking to very specifically both Paul Tillich and Rudolf Otto as support for his account of the symbolic, the religious symbolic, in terms of this psychic operator, these feelings that have to do with the correspondence of the intellectual orientation. *But this is an account in which there is something on the lower level of feeling which is helping up a higher level of intellectual orientation.*

*He's not talking in that way at all any more in [Method in Theology](#).*

*The experience of being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the basic fulfillment; now it's going to have a relationship to what happens afterwards; it's going to have a relationship to how well you are able to think, how well you are able to pursue the unrestricted desire. But it's no longer, first of all, located as something that's kind of the auxiliary and helper of intellectual development; it's the basic thing that intellectual development is really desiring for.*

*The second thing to notice is that it's called a dynamism; it's got a dynamism of its own. So there's an unrestricted dynamism of our intelligent inquiry, of our inquiry for judgment of fact, of our inquiry towards value and decisions. But there's a distinct kind of dynamism that emerges once the basic fulfillment of that other dynamism is met. You don't get to become [compactly](#) happy when you get the basic fulfillment. The basic fulfillment brings into play a new kind of dynamism, while at the same time giving a basic fulfillment or a basic satisfaction of the other kind of dynamism.*

I'll talk about how Lonergan how thinks about that other kind of dynamism in a moment.

**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*.

Pat: Jeff?

Jeff: Sorry, not to back-up too far, but I just was wondering, kind of as we were going through this, with the first three levels of questioning when we discussed like insight and judgment, or reflexive judgment, and that kind of progression; when you get to the valuation, you know, the final step we had reached was *when* there is no further question, and that's when you know that your judgment is either affirmed or denied. When in the aspect of evaluation and like a more ethical or moral stance, when is the question at that point kind of fulfilled?

Pat: You're jumping ahead — We're going to talk about that. It's ambiguous in *Insight*. Lonergan has a different way of thinking about the issues in the context of *Insight* than he does when he gets to *Method in Theology*. In *Insight*, *the criteria for ethical activity, ethical deciding is a consistency between knowing and doing*. Now, what exactly he means by that is something we'll have to talk about next week and perhaps the week after that. When we get to *Method in Theology*, Lonergan is going to say that judgments of value are similar in structure to judgments of fact. And that's about all he says about it. I take that to mean that just as there being no further pertinent questions on the level of reflection, that is to say, questions about judgments, questions about factualness, about correctness, about realness, just as there being no further pertinent questions on that level, is one of the most important sources of us getting to the virtually unconditioned, so that we can make judgments of fact that are correct; something like that also happens on the level of value: that when we're deliberating over what to do, we entertain lots of questions about, well, What would happen if I do this? and How would I feel about myself if I do this? — there's a lot of further questions — What are the consequences? What are the values at play? *And reaching answers to all those questions is what's required for us to reach a virtually unconditioned judgment of value, and an authentic decision grounded in a value known to be a value worth pursuing!* So that would be the parallel! That's it! In *Insight*, Lonergan doesn't talk about that. He actually doesn't even spell it out in *Method in Theology* as much as I just suggested. But that is how I think — That's what I think would correspond to it. Okay? But we're just getting introduced to that right now, for the first time in the course of our study. Okay!

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.

Pat: Okay, other questions? ... Tim?

Tim: Yeah, I'm just wondering about how to relate this kind of account of being-in-love with falling in love, with the account of knowing that we've been given so far? So I know — I'm aware that elsewhere Lonergan distinguishes that human development happens in two kinds, from below upwards and from above downwards; and so from below upwards is the intelligent inquiry and the reasonable reflecting, and from above downwards is that kind of falling in love. And on page 107 of *Method* he talks about — You just mentioned that there is this new level of consciousness —

Pat: Right!

Tim: — that emerges in *Method*, and it's not present in *Insight*, this deliberation of What is the good of it? And so on page 107, he says — This is just before the first full paragraph —

**“So the gift of God’s love occupies the ground and root of the fourth and highest level of man’s intentional consciousness.”** (*MiT*, p. 107).

So I'm wondering is this — How many levels are there? Is this a fourth level, this state of being-in-love, or is that a fifth level? Because later on, on page 122, he talks about: there is an

exception to this old dictum that “Knowledge precedes love!” Right? There is just this radical overturning of falling, and you advert to it in mid-fall. But the gift of falling in love is a grace! And I believe yet it’s not something that you’ve done! So yeah, I guess I’m just wondering: Is this falling in love being-in-love with God really a part of these four levels, is it a fifth level? Or are we just talking about something that’s completely off the scale, so to speak?

Pat: That a great question, and it’s much debated by Lonergan scholars!

Tim: Oh.

Pat: And since you’ve got this Lonergan scholar, I will give my answer. *Lonergan did, on three different occasions, talk about a fifth level of consciousness, which he identified with being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion. Now, I think that is the right answer! Part of the reason for that is the un-restrictedness!* There aren’t any other acts on any other levels of consciousness that we’ve talked about so far, or that we will talk about in the next couple of weeks when we talk about Lonergan’s Ethics and Lonergan’s thinking about values, and — I don’t want to anticipate! — *There aren’t any unrestricted acts on any of those levels. But this is an act that has a basic un-restrictedness to it.* It’s funny in the sense that it doesn’t answer all of our questions, and if anything, it intensifies and gives rise to further questions that we wouldn’t have thought of otherwise, or that wouldn’t bother us in the same way. *But nevertheless, it’s got something that nothing else has, which is this experience of un-restrictedness. It’s fundamentally an experience of oneself as made different. It’s a distinct dynamism!* It isn’t the dynamism of *Eros*, to use the Greek word that [some](#) Christian [writers](#) allowed to the experience of *Agapé*; what Lonergan — So that the below-upwards is the dynamism of *Eros*, and the above downwards is the dynamism of *Agapé*. ***And I think the answer is that it is a fifth level!***

There is a passage in here where Lonergan says — I’m not sure I can find it quickly — Let me see if I can find it quickly. ...The passage I’m looking for is: *as long as one is in it, it’s totally absorbing.* ... I’m not going to find it. I’ll try and find it further on, and send it on to you folks.

*So first of all Lonergan said it three times, but he didn’t write any articles about it; he defended it in at least one.* I think from conversations with people that there is something qualitatively distinct — if so, *the three levels of consciousness that we’ve talked about are*

*qualitatively distinct ways of being present to oneself.* When you just put your attention to some rays on the beach, you're present to yourself in a way that's dramatically different from the way you are present to yourself as you're trying to work out problems, trying to understand a text, trying to understand what's going on in a complicated human situation. You're qualitatively differently present to yourself when you're not just trying to get ideas, but trying to make judgments about those ideas. You're qualitatively still further differently present to yourself when you're engaged in the difficult process of deciding what's right and what you're going to do about it. I think what Lonergan talks about here as being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion: you are qualitatively different in your presence to yourself: Your being is being-in-love.

Think of having some fine crystal glasses and taking them out to a perfectly clear body of water, and putting them into the body of water, so that where they end and where the water begins is no longer clear. That's what he means by being in love in an unrestricted fashion; and then your being becomes being-in-love. *The distinction between the love and the beloved becomes undifferentiated. That again is different than any other kind of way in which we are present to ourselves in any given levels of consciousness. So I think it's a fifth level!! But it has a dynamism of its own.* And I'm going to reserve talking about the dynamism of its own until later on because I've a section, a presentation, and I'm going to focus on that. Okay.

**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.]

Pat: Okay, other questions on this? ... Yeah, Shakrit?

Shakrit: You said that in being in love there is an undifferentiated consciousness?

Pat: Ah, there is an un-differentiatedness between the loving and the beloved.

Sakrit: Okay. There is the movement from undifferentiated consciousness to differentiated consciousness; and then what about this step then that leads to being-in-love? How does one differentiate consciousness that is —

Pat: — Yeah. *It basically is a mediated immediacy.* So this is kind of drawing out things that we haven't talked about. In the context of *Method in Theology*, Lonergan is going to tend to talk in terms of how the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning — where in *Insight* he talks about reality as what is to be known through — and he doesn't use the word — through the *mediations* of experiencing, but especially inquiry, understanding, reflection, grasping the virtually unconditioned, and judging; *so that's reality as mediated.*

And remember in “Cognitional Structure” he says that objects of sense are not our immediate relationship with being. Our

*immediate relationship with being is in our unrestricted desire!*

That we use our — we even use our experiences to mediate our relationship with being. *We use our experiences as things to give us insights, and as things that will help us to gather the evidence and conditions that lead to the virtually unconditioned, so that we can make a judgment about what is! So we mediate our relationship with reality by our experiencing, by our understanding, by our judging, by our questioning, and so on.*

And the problem with the already-out-there-now is that it tends to regard reality as though it were immediate; that is what biologically extroverted consciousness takes as the criterion of reality, immediate presence. It's why common sense is so vulnerable to the bias of — to general bias, because it's concerned with the immediate, the unmediated. The future and the past we have to mediate, and we all are very aware of the fact that we have to mediate them. What is in front of us in the room doesn't seem like we're going to have to mediate it.

So when he gets to *Method in Theology*, Lonergan is going to

shift from talking about

- (1) being as the already-out-there-now, or reality as the already-out-there-now,
- and
- (2) the reality as what's known through experiencing, understanding, and judging,
- to

- (1) the world of immediacy
- and
- (2) the world mediated by meaning.

*But he has the funny thing that there is also a return to an immediacy that is mediated.* You did this a little bit when you — in learning how to enter into the aesthetic pattern of experiencing. People have to learn how to participate in a painting or in a musical work. You have to learn a lot so that you can enter more richly into the immediacy of the experiencing. And *being-in-love in an*

*unrestricted fashion is like that. People who have rather dramatic conversion experiences would not think of themselves as having done very much by way of mediating those experiences. But once they've had them, they learn how to put themselves back in that immediate state, that state of being-in-love and not in a conditional fashion. Does that make some sense?*

Sakrit: Sure, thank you.

So to come back to where we were a moment ago, Lonergan has made a shift here. He's using Tillich and Otto to talk about something, and using almost exactly the same aspects of what they were talking about, to talk about something different. *This is not symbol as an image tied to feelings that have the function of being the psychic operator. He is now talking about their work in relationship to this basic fulfilment of the unrestricted human intentionality.*

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.

## **Religious Experience**

**What, then, does Lonergan mean by ‘religion’?”**

**Metaphor of ‘superstructure’ and ‘infrastructure’**

**“the wordless prayer of mystics ...”**

**“in using language we are on the level of superstructure, and are merely pointing to an infrastructure that ceases, as soon as it is named, to be pure religious experience.”**

**F. Crowe, “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion”,  
pp. 112-113.**

So Father Crowe in his article says: “What, then, does Lonergan mean by ‘religion’?” And he uses this metaphor of the superstructure and the infrastructure. It’s a metaphor from architecture and from building; the infrastructure is the girders and the beams and the posts, and the superstructure is what’s built around them. So it’s a metaphor, and like any metaphor it has a limited usefulness. It’s a metaphor — Lonergan does actually use that terminology. Father Crowe really liked it, and pushed it for all it was worth. But *the point to the metaphor is that religious experience is not the language about it.* Father Crowe mentions “the wordless prayer of the mystics.” *The wordless prayer of mystics is that experience of the mediated immediacy. It’s the experience of the basic fulfillment, as being in the presence of that which is a fundamental, and profound, and basic, and profoundly satisfying fulfillment, of our unrestricted intentionality.*

Maybe it’s just an aside — maybe something that doesn’t need to be saying in this class — *it means that religious experience is profoundly reasonable, because by ‘reasonable’ he means following relentlessly the pursuit of your questions about what is so, and is true. And*

*Loneragan is saying that religious experience is a fundamental fulfillment of our most profound desire to be reasonable. Now, that's not to say that people don't make mistakes in thinking that they're having religious experience when in fact they are just "blissed out"! —*

[Some bemused murmurs in class]

— that people are not using some form of self-hypnosis, or even abusing this experience as an avoidance of further pertinent questions. That happens! And that of course gives great scandal to religiosity! But at least the way Lonergan is talking about it: *religious experience is not an avoidance of reasonableness. It's intrinsically related to being reasonable! So "the wordless prayer of the mystics" is that mediated immediacy of the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality.* But in using language about it,

**"we are on the level of superstructure, and are merely pointing to an infrastructure that ceases, as soon as it is named, to be pure religious experience."**<sup>19</sup>

*So you are no longer in the withdrawal into the immediacy of the dynamism of the basic fulfillment. You are starting to talk about it, and once you start to talk about it — If you're praying and you're talking to God, or you're talking to yourself, or you're thinking about the things that you have to do at work, or you're sort of thinking about how the prayer is going, or, you know, the things that are on your mind, the people you forgot to phone-call, or whatever. You are no longer in the immediacy! You're doing something else! And even if you're thinking about what you're doing when you're doing it, you're no longer in the immediacy: you're operating at the superstructure!*

And as Father Crowe says:

"What, then, does Lonergan mean by religion **in the present context**?" It is not any of the institutional religions with their expressed beliefs and codes of conduct, their rituals and customs."

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<sup>19</sup> F. Crowe, "Lonergan's Universalist View of Religion", p. 113.

That is perhaps a little misleading. What I think Father Crowe meant to say there was: ‘What does Lonergan mean by *religious experience*?’; because later on we will see *Lonergan is very emphatic that religion is a communal and social and cultural phenomenon*; that the communal dimension of religion is not something that is arbitrary. It’s intrinsic and essential. *So I think that what he really meant there with that is that religious experience is not any of the institutional religions with their superstructure. The superstructure is not the experience; the experience is more fundamental! And, of course, what Lonergan is going to make the argument for, as Father Crowe does, that real — that the fire in the heart of religious institutions is this religious experience that is the basic fulfillment to the upward thrust of our inquiring being.*

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.

So I wanted to kind of deepen this a little bit more by thinking more concretely, at least more concretely in terms of just what we’ve read of Lonergan, and of Father Crowe’s article, about the superstructure and the infrastructure. There is, in *Method in Theology*, a very noticeable — and I think especially for people who are not Christian — a very noticeable Christian superstructure in the account.

## Religious Experience

### Metaphor of 'superstructure' and 'infrastructure'

Christian superstructure:

Romans 5 : 5 "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

"Being in love with God"

"being-in-love"

### Self-Appropriation superstructure :

"Basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality"

Probably in his later career, Lonergan didn't quote anything more often than St Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, chapter five, verse five:

**God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.**

That is a very Christian way of speaking. And *to say that the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality is to be identified as "the love of God poured out in our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit"* is not the sort of thing that just anybody would say. *It's a mediation! It's part of the superstructure.* Back away from Paul's letter, to say that the basic fulfillment is "being in love with God" is not the infrastructure, is not the immediacy of the experience. *It's a*

*mediation of it! It's language about it that points to it! Or for that matter, to say “being-in-love”, to use the word ‘love’ in this context is not beyond dispute world-wide! Love means different things; that was what I said a few minutes ago: you folks all came in with different meanings of ‘love’. Most of what passes for love on television is a prevailing account, a prevailing interpretation, that gives a prevailing meaning to the word ‘love’. So much so, that some truly religious people, for whom the word ‘love’ is not part of their tradition, would find it at least strange, if not offensive, to say that that’s what this is all about. To use that term, as Lonergan uses it, is to use it in a very specifically Christian context, to give it a very specifically Christian superstructure, or mediation. And remember, as experience, that this basic fulfillment doesn’t yet have an interpretation; which isn’t to say that it doesn’t arise in traditions, and that people aren’t formed with traditions that mediate them into this immediacy. But as experienced, it’s open to being mediated in a variety of ways. There’s also Lonergan’s own self-appropriation in superstructure. To talk about it as “the basic fulfillment of our conscious intentionality” is to give it an interpretation. It is not, in and of itself, the experience.*

**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.**

Now that’s all to say that whether or not those are correct and appropriate ways of characterizing the experience is a hermeneutical phenomenon. It’s a phenomenon — *It’s a question of interpretation! It’s a question of meaning!* It’s a question of whether or not what Lonergan has defined this basic experience to be, really does match what, for example, the Christian tradition means by love as *Agapé*. *Lonergan obviously thought it did. I think it does.* But the minute you start to talk about this as “Lonergan’s Universalist View of Religion”, you’re using a specifically Christian mediation of it.

*And that's not what he means by some of the language that he has about the fact that this is an experience that is present in all human beings, present in all human cultures. It's precisely because of its un-conditionedness, that it doesn't matter what your upbringing was that makes you capable of having this experience.*

*What makes you capable of having this experience is the unrestricted openness of your intentionality. To say that it is a gift from God is, I would think, true! But I think that, within the context, it is a very specifically Christian context: that is, I think that for someone that isn't sharing the background and the assumptions that I'm sharing, we would have to have a long conversation before either I could persuade them of the meaningfulness of talking this way, or they could persuade me otherwise. But behind this is a claim about a phenomenon, a conscious phenomenon, that is at the heart of all religious traditions.*

### 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.

## Expressions of Religious Experience

Descriptions

Incarnate manifestations

Symbols

Artistic

Differentiated and developed expressions

Philosophical, Theological, etc.

*So, if we have mediations of this experience, an experience that is in and of itself just an experience, a dynamic experience — it's got a dynamism of its own, it's got an unrestrictedness of its own — but it doesn't come with tags pasted on to it, so that we have words automatically. That means that we have to find ways of expressing it. And the first thing to recognize is that it is inexpressible, because it is a basic experience of un-conditionedness. And for that very reason, no language of expressing it is ever going to be fully adequate!*

And so, [as listed on the slide](#), there are ways we can talk about **descriptions** of the experience, **incarnate manifestations** of it, **symbols**, **artistic** expressions of it; and then **developed and differentiated** expressions of it, such as a *Philosophy of Religious Experience*, a *Theology of Religious Experience*, and so on. So there are many different kinds of expressions about this. But it's not the expressions that are what religion is all about — Or, I shouldn't say it's not the expressions that religion is all about!!

*It's not the expressions that determine what the experience is; it's the experience which are the touchstones for the adequacy or the inadequacy of the expressions!*

Pat: Yeah, Byron?

Byron: Could you also have *explanations*, could you use also strictly scientific explanatory —

Pat: Sure! I didn't put 'scientific' in there [on the slide](#). I could have. I probably should have. So explanations, scientific explanations: I tended to lump those under "Differentiated and Developed Expressions", and to use 'philosophy' and 'theology', yeah. So philosophical and theological expressions in the way that I had in mind when I said that, when I wrote that down those explanatory — but there is also just the Science of Religious Studies, the History of Religions, and so on. So yeah, sure!

Okay, **descriptions**. *Initially Lonergan just says being in love, and then he says being in love in an unconditioned fashion, is the proper and basic fulfillment.* What's it like to be in love? Never mind to be in love with God. What's it like to be in love? ... It's like walking on clouds! It's like a permanent smile, peace to all nations! ... What are some of the other ways in which people describe what it's like to be in love? ... Matt?

Matt: It's the object of your love; it's — you recognize the presence of the object, the person, in all sorts of different areas, a kind of altered viewpoint.

Pat: I think you're giving an explanatory answer to the question. Can you put that into a more descriptive way, when you say see her first and know —

Matt: I see her everywhere.

Pat; Okay. That's a descriptive thing. Okay, so describing the experience. You know, the reason I asked you to do this — I think I noticed a lot of embarrassed smiles, and nervous movements here. *Partly that's about how difficult it is to put into words what being in love with another human being is all about. Being in love in an unconditional fashion is not the sort of thing that human beings usually have with one another. I won't say it never happens.* But human beings are in love and then they fight! And then they make-up and they are in love again! And then they fight. And so there is always the undertow of being in love, but it's not unconditional being in love. The experience of being unconditionally in love is analogous to the human forms of loving, but "on speed"!!

[Loud class laughter]

That's what unconditional being in love — it never stops! It never goes away. That's what unconditional loving is all about! Now, describe that! I just did, "on speed"!! And everyone laughed because it's — on the one hand it sort of got it, on the other hand it's not. It's beyond that! That's what made the joke of it. So if you can try to describe religious experience: anything never adequately describes it.

Now, notice what happens if somebody thinks, "I've got the right description, and you've got the wrong description!" "I'm religious and you're not!" *Part of what Lonergan is doing here is to open up the possibility of genuine inter-religious dialogue.* That every one of us has got some fundamental description about what this experience is about; but so much of it outstrips those descriptions.

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.

I want to draw your attention to the second quote [in the slide](#) there.

**“Religious experience spontaneously manifests itself in changed attitudes, in that harvest of the Spirit that is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”** (*MiT*, p. 108.)

### **Expressions of Religious Experience**

**“A symbol is an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.”** (*MiT*, p. 64).

**“Religious experience spontaneously manifests itself in changed attitudes, in that harvest of the Spirit that is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control.”** (*MiT*, p. 108.)

**“But ... the expression ... varies greatly as one moves from earlier to later stages of meaning.”** (*MiT*, p. 108.)

Arguably, the first expression of religious experience is **what you do** because you are in love. It's the change in your attitudes and it's a change in your behaviours. It isn't so much — you don't necessarily change your jobs. You don't necessarily change your clothes. You might do either of those. But what is almost certain is you change the way you do things. You change the way that you do the things that you've been doing all along. That's, if you like, the first expression of religious experience. When you're in love in an unconditional fashion it changes the way the world looks, and the way that you respond to the world.

The next kind of expression is **symbolic expression**. Earlier in *Method In Theology*, not a page that I assigned for you folks today, Lonergan gives a new definition of a symbol. And the new definition of a symbol is [the following](#):

**“A symbol is an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.”** (*MiT*, p. 64).

*In this case, the feeling is unconditional love, or the basic fulfillment.* It’s still — In one sense it sounds very close to what he was doing in *Insight*, because when he made his hypothesis about what the psychic operator would have to be, he said it would have to be something having to do with emotion. But he didn’t say that it had to do with being in love. And he didn’t describe it, as I mentioned before, as being *the pinnacle of our self-transcendence*; he looked at it as rather being one of the aids towards self-transcendence, being sort of instrumental! But now a **symbol** is going to be a symbol that has something to do with *the evoking of religious experience, or flowing out of religious experience*. So in one sense, *just the changed attitudes, the way people behave differently is already a symbol of religious experience*: when people are kind and forgiving to people that they weren’t previously kind and forgiving to, that’s already a symbol of religious experience.

But obviously we have much **more developed symbols**, both of the kinds that we saw before, images, very very special images of one kind or another, and also the stories, the explanations, the ways in which stories intensify and elaborate our experience of what it’s like to be in love, that *manifest to us what the fundamental meaning of this profound fulfillment is all about*.

And as Lonergan says, there are lots of different kinds of expressions, and they vary from one stage of human sophistication to another. [We find](#) the same sort of thing that he said in chapter seventeen of *Insight* (*CWL* 3, “**Metaphysics as Dialectic**,” pp. 553-617) about the meaning and the place of religious symbolism in the development of human self-appropriation; but now he’s saying it for a different meaning of symbol. Initially, there’s an association of religious experience with its outward occasion, [so that the experience comes to be expressed in association with that outward occasion](#).

## **Expressions of Religious Experience**

**“So it is that by associating religious experience with its outward occasion that the experience becomes expressed ...**

**“Such outward occasions are called hierophanies, and they are many. ...**

**“There is, I suppose, no clear-cut evidence to show that such religious experience conforms to the model I have set forth ... (*MiT*, p. 108).**

**“In the earliest stage, expression results from insight into sensible presentations and representations.” (*MiT*, p. 108).**

So that's always the case: you have to have some kind of phantasm to have an insight, and then the insight to have a judgment!

**“There easily is pointed out the spatial but not the temporal, the specific but not the generic, the external but not the internal, the human but not the divine. Only in so far as the temporal, generic, internal, divine, can somehow be associated with or — in the language of the naïve realist — ‘projected’ upon the spatial, specific, external, human, can an insight be had and expression result. So it is by associating religious experience with its outward occasion that the experience becomes expressed and thereby something determinate and distinct for human consciousness.” (*MiT*, p. 108).**

*So, in other words, what he is saying is that at a certain stage of human development, of cultural development, people are going to talk about that which evokes their religious experience as the object of their religious experience, rather than the symbol of their religious experience. They regard the outward occasion as the cause and the source.*

**“Such outward occasions are called hierophanies, and they are many. When each of the many is something distinct and unrelated to the others, the hierophanies reveal the so-called gods of the moment. When they are many but recognized as possessing a family resemblance, then there is a living polytheism, represented today by the eight hundred thousand gods of Shintoism.”** (MiT, p. 108).

*So in other words, the experience of being in love in an unconditioned fashion, at least as a Christian would describe that, happens to people all the time, and in all kinds of places. And when it happens, they will remember where it happened, and that will be their sacred place. And until a proper way of thinking about how to relate those multiple manifestations, those multiple symbols, is that all people will tend to think that there are many divine places, and identify the divine with the place, when in fact the divine is unconditionally mysterious; and clearly not limitable by a particularity of place or time.*

And then Lonergan goes on to talk about when the experiences are experiences of a single person and united by the unity of the person, then there is the god of the person, the god of Jacob or Laban. When the implication is social, there is a god or gods of the group. And so on and so forth. *So the various expressions that people have of religious experience are manifold.*

**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 in immediate religious experience itself.

How Lonergan handles the charge that religious experience is inner human subjectivity: he recognizes the universal nature of religious experience while not reducing it to immanent subjectivity.

That doesn't exhaust the meaningfulness of religious experience, and it doesn't exhaust the whole phenomenon of religion, because in addition to the immediacy of religious experience, *there is also what Lonergan calls the Word; the entry of God into communicating with human beings.*

### **The Word**

**“By the word is meant any expression of religious meaning or of religious value.”**

**“By its word, religion enters the world mediated by meaning and regulated by value.”**

**“Before it enters the world mediated by meaning, religion is the prior word God speaks to us by flooding our hearts with his love.”**

*(MiT, p. 112).*

So there's not only — So Lonergan, as Father Crowe points out in his article — Lonergan was very aware of the problem of Modernism. Modernism means a number of different things. But in the context of Catholic doctrinal development, one of the key criticisms

of what came to be called Modernism is that religious is just the experience of inner human subjectivity; that what religion is about is not about anything real, and certainly not about anything that's real and transcendent to human experience. It's an expression of the manifestation of human experience.

Lonergan struggled for a long time to trying to figure out how to make sense of his own religious experience in relationship to things that he believed to be true from his own religious tradition. And he finally sorted it out in the fashion in which we see it here. The key to this is *what the religious experience is about*. So he's affirming it as a gift from God, but to work out that this experience is *first of all a gift, and not something self-generated*, and secondly a gift *from a Transcendent Being, a Being beyond proportionate being*. That's not contained in the account of the religious experience, or even in the account of the expressions, the descriptions, the symbols of religious experience. *It is a further set of questions, a further set of questions that Lonergan has some ways of giving answers to. So on the one hand, he can give an account of religious experience, and religious expression and religious symbols that recognize fundamental human experiences, and on the other hand, don't reduce it to something that is an immanent form of human subjectivity.*

Okay. We'll have to end there. You may have noticed that we didn't talk about interpretation in *Insight* today, so we'll do that. I would ask you to go ahead and read chapter eighteen (*CWL 3, "The Possibility of Ethics"*, pp. 618-656) for next time. I'll finish up talking about interpretation in the latter part of chapter seventeen (*CWL 3, "Metaphysics as Dialectic"* pp. 553-617) the next time; and we'll begin talking about chapter eighteen (*CWL 3, "The Possibility of Ethics"*, pp. 618-656) then.

**Class Twenty-Three Ends.**