

**Insight & Beyond II, Lecture 8, Part II: Chapter 16, “Metaphysics as Science” continued  
Chapter 17: “Metaphysics, Mystery & Myth”;**

[0:00]

- Series of Student Questions:
- What if the structure of our knowing were to change? How would that affect the structure of proportionate being? E.g., what if humans developed pheromonal responses?
  - Various technological and biological modifications of human beings would not change what *knowing* is – i.e., knowing remains understanding the given data correctly.

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- Question about the precise meanings of ‘matter’ and ‘material’; does Lonergan have an Aristotelian or modern notion of matter?
  - Review of the distinction between the spiritual and the material:
  - First approximation: the former is intelligibility that is intelligent, the latter is intelligibility that is not intelligent.
  - Second, and full meaning: Lonergan defines the spiritual as not intrinsically conditioned by space and time, while the material is so conditioned.
  - By “material” Lonergan means something different from what a materialist means.
  - Discussion of the key implications that follow: space and time are in being, not vice versa.
  - Neither space nor time, but intelligibility is the criteria for the meaning of being.

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- The Intellectual Context of Chapter 17§1: The “demythologization debate”
- Certain questions about mystery and myth versus rationality informed this chapter.
- The 20<sup>th</sup> century scholarly attempts to come to terms with the meaning of religious expressions which, to people in a modern scientific age, seem fantastic and unbelievable.
- Are mystery and myth cognate to the earlier stages of metaphysics, vanishing thereafter?
  - Rudolf Bultmann demythologized the New Testament by getting rid of the mythological elements and giving it an existentialist reading: *Kerygma and Myth*.
- The question is whether the mythological elements of religious expressions would also vanish in light of Lonergan’s *explanatory* metaphysics.

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- Further in the background is August Comte’s “Introduction to Positivist Philosophy.”
- Comte proposed three successive ages: the mythical, metaphysical, and positive ages.
- The earlier ages and forms of explanation have been eclipsed by the “positive,” i.e., scientific age.
- The age when explanations are restricted to those based on “positive” evidence of sensation.
- Lonergan aims to restore the meaning of religious expressions despite the positivist critique, and to do so in a way that is in keeping with his explanatory metaphysics.

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- Lonergan will argue that there is some permanent meaningfulness to human religious expressions that will survive in a fully explanatory context.
- Thus in Chapter 17 Lonergan is concerned with the problem of interpretation in general, and with the interpretation of religious expressions in particular.
- The problem of interpretation for Lonergan arises from the different kinds (“polymorphism”) of patterns of experience.
- What is real for one pattern is different from what is real for another pattern.

- Certain patterns of experience are incompatible with others; e.g., the aesthetic and the pragmatic.

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- Basic to Lonergan's approach to interpretation of religious expressions arises from his distinction among: Image as Image, Image as Symbol and Image as Sign.
  - As *image*: sensible content operating on the sensory level,
  - As *symbol*: linked with the paradoxical 'known unknown',
  - As *sign*, the image is linked with some interpretation of the import of the image.
- The '*known unknown*': all of our knowing occurs with awareness of a great horizon of still unanswered questions; the unknown is not just absolutely unknown, but we have an awareness ("known") of the unknown by means of our remaining questions.
- The "known unknown" is Lonergan's guiding heuristic principle in *Insight* for the interpretation of religious expressions.
- The symbol parallels the unrestricted desire to know, and thus opens up a way to discuss religious experience – one that is appropriate to the modern era.
- How the image as symbol relates to the image as sign – the latter is the already interpreted symbol.
- Symbols get situated in myths; and myths themselves are already 'signs' in Lonergan's sense, because they give interpretations of the image-symbol.

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- Mircea Eliade identified the heart of religious symbolism as a 'center within chaos'; i.e., an inhabited microcosm surrounded by the "unknown," the formless, mysterious domain occupied by demons, ghosts, the Other, chaos, etc.

[41:29]

- The Image and Symbol of the Tree.
- Exercise in recognizing our different modes of perception of the tree (image as image, image as symbol).
- The Image as Constructed: the Cosmic Tree.
- The Tree as foundation of the cosmos.
- Since the 'known-unknown' never vanishes, and so there's always a permanent human need for images as symbols.