

# **Insight and Beyond**

Class 26, Part Two: April 14th 2010

***Insight, Chapter 18: “The Possibility of Ethics”***

***Method in Ethics and Ontology of the Good***

**Class 26, April 14, 2010**

**Chapter 18: “The Possibility of Ethics”**

**Method in Ethics & Ontology of the Good**

## **Summary of Material**

Human freedom is a compound of experiencing, practical insight, practical reflection and decisions — but the most fundamental constituent of human freedom is the radical contingency of the decision.

One would expect Lonergan to next show the implications of this analysis in §2 for a method of ethics.

Reprise of the isomorphism between knowing and being at the heart of the method of metaphysics, as the likely parallel for working out a method of ethics.

Lonergeran states that the “**division and the hierarchy of values**” reveal how the exigence for consistency between knowing and doing “**unfolds into a body of precepts concretely operative in moral consciousness**” — but he does not expand upon this remark.

Question of what Lonergan meant by that statement.

Division of values into true and false, terminal and originating, actual or in process, and hierarchical.

Discussion of the differences and relations among different kinds of values.

Lonergeran defines value: “**Value is the possible object of choice.**”

The constitutive factor of value is choice that is consistent with our knowing.

Discussion of why are objects of desire values “**only inasmuch as they fall under some intelligible order**”?

Objects of desire are conditioned by intelligible social orders (which are the conditions for their continual supply), and social orders are conditioned by human choices.

So the constitutive role of choice passes from choosing through orders to objects of desire.

This relation of conditioned and conditioning establishes a hierarchy of values.

The most basic value, and therefore the highest value, is originating value — the decision-making capacity that grounds all other human goods.

Transition to the Ontology of the Good.

In the discussion of the division and hierarchy of values, Lonergan is claiming that everything originated by human choosing is good (insofar as it meets the exigence for consistency with knowing).

In the ontology of the good, he now expands that, to claim that *everything that is*, is good.

The key to his argument is that one cannot consistently choose as good the conditioned without becoming involved with also choosing the concrete conditions for that good, whether one realizes this or not.

And the universal order of emergent probability is the condition for every proportionate being, and is, therefore, good when *anything* is chosen as of value.

**“Act locally, think globally”** for Lonergan means acting in a way that is mindful of the implications for the emergence of the destiny of the whole universe.

This is the gist of Lonergan’s approach to the method of ethics in Chapter 18: **“The Possibility of Ethics”**.

Student question about how it is possible to do anything that is morally or ethically wrong, if the universe really is indeterminately directed?

This question is similar to a previous question as to whether meaning is greater than being.

The distinction between true and false values is relevant here.

A false value is a plan put into action without being motivated by a grasp of the virtually unconditioned.

What is put into play by such decisions is a social surd — a mixture of the intelligible and the unintelligible.

Follow-up question taken from *Topics in Education*, where it seems that Lonergan is saying that defects in intelligibility lead to breakdowns. How is the discussion of obligatoriness related to that?

Knowledge of obligation is reached at the end of the self-correcting process, where there are no further questions to further correct our course of action.

When that is lacking, what is put into play is defective intelligibility which does eventually lead to breakdown.

Brief overview of the “**Problem of Liberation**”; fuller discussion deferred to class on Chapter 20.

**End of Part Two**

# Insight and Beyond

Class 26, Part Two: April 14th 2010

***Insight, Chapter 18: “The Possibility of Ethics”***

***Method in Ethics and Ontology of the Good***

## Method of Ethics

**“An ethics results from knowledge of the compound structure of one’s knowing and doing.”**

(CWL 3, p. 23; see also p. 618).

**Human freedom is a compound of experiencing, practical insight, practical reflection and decisions — but the most fundamental constituent of human freedom is the radical contingency of the decision.**

Okay. Let’s begin again! After focusing on this structure of knowing and doing, I’m actually going to go backwards, and go back to section one and then jump ahead to section three. *So reminding ourselves again that Lonergan says you can work on a method of ethics based on the unified structure of knowing and doing.* And although Lonergan presents it in this other context of trying to give a phenomenological refinement and almost isolation, where is the real constitutive moment that makes human freedom be free? So human freedom doesn’t exist outside of practical reflection, practical insight, outside of sensation, outside of the embodied and situated in a world fraught with statistical residues, although that is all part and parcel of human freedom, nevertheless *the thing that makes it be human freedom is this radically contingent, not depending on anything else, decision.*

One would expect Lonergan to next show the implications of this analysis in §2 for a method of ethics. Reprise of the isomorphism between knowing and being at the heart of the method of metaphysics, as the likely parallel for working out a method of ethics.

Lonergan states that the “**division and the hierarchy of values**” reveal how the exigence for consistency between knowing and doing “**unfolds into a body of precepts concretely operative in moral consciousness**” — but he does not expand upon this remark.

Question of what Lonergan meant by that statement.

Division of values into true and false, terminal and originating, actual or in process, and hierarchical.

Discussion of the differences and relations among different kinds of values.

Lonergan defines value: “**Value is the possible object of choice.**”

The constitutive factor of value is choice that is consistent with our knowing.

Discussion of why are objects of desire values “**only inasmuch as they fall under some intelligible order**”?

Objects of desire are conditioned by intelligible social orders (which are the conditions for their continual supply), and social orders are conditioned by human choices.

So the constitutive role of choice passes from choosing through orders to objects of desire.

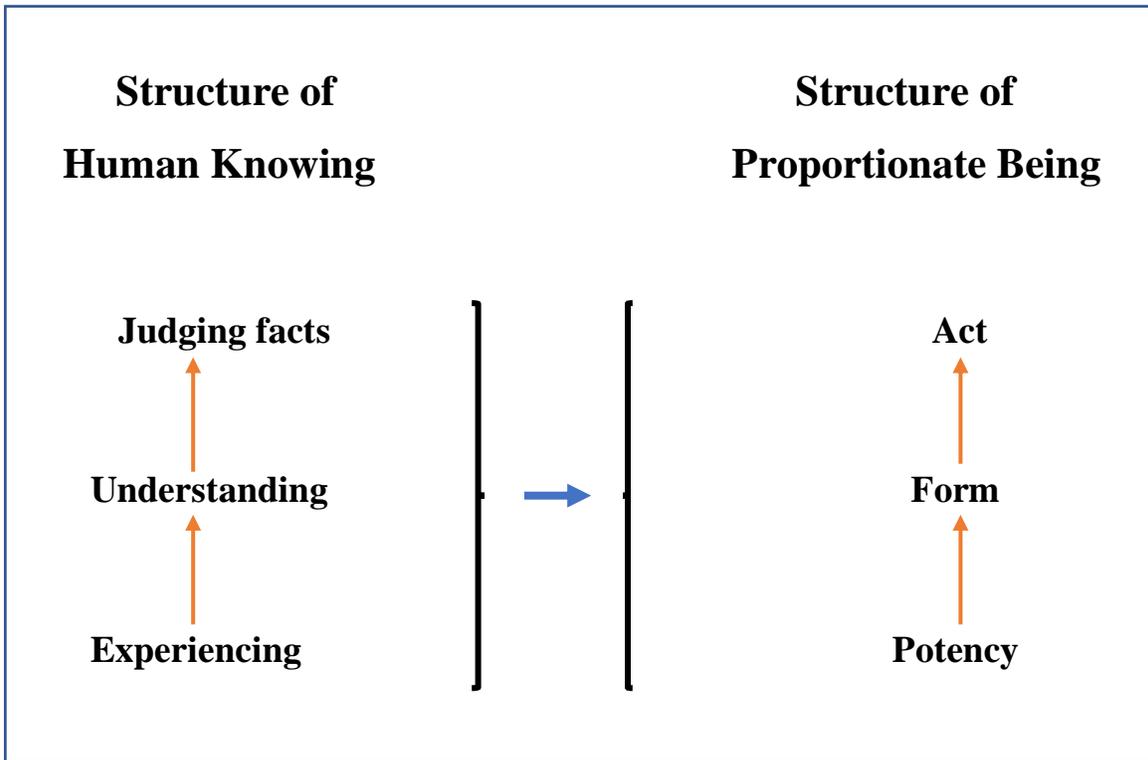
This relation of conditioned and conditioning establishes a hierarchy of values.

The most basic value, and therefore the highest value, is originating value — the decision-making capacity that grounds all other human goods.

Now, having said that, it seems like, okay: so you would expect him to have laid this out, and then shown how it had these implications that he says it's going to have for a method of ethics.

So let's just recall how he does what he says is the parallel that he is now going to invoke in doing a method of ethics, when he is doing a method of metaphysics. You have this parallel, this isomorphism: different entities, or if you like different acts, but the same structure, between the activities of knowing and the constituents of proportionate being. I did this kind of busying diagram to kind of emphasize it a little bit more.

*The structure of proportionate being isn't just potency form and act, it's finality.* So just as the unrestricted desire to know is that which structures our knowing, not only into experiencing, understanding and judging, but further questions, further understandings — further questions, further enriched experiences that come out of our understandings and judgments, further understandings, further judgments; and so on in a repeating cycle.



You’ve got something parallel to that in Lonergan’s account of the higher levels and the higher order of explanatory genera. *I think, where from one point of view — from the lower science point of view — what is the act of a lower form, that event which is the enactment of the lower form itself— from the perspective of a higher systematization of the coincidental and the statistical residue becomes the potency for the emergence of something higher.* And so you’ve got a parallelism, not just between the tripartite experiencing, understanding and judging, and potency, form and act, but a parallelism between the whole emergence of human knowledge and the emergence of the Universe.

One would expect that Lonergan will do something like that with the structure of human knowing and doing.

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“Ontological Structure”  
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But remember, *the way* in which Lonergan was able to make the case for potency, form, and act as constituents of reality, derived from the judgment about ‘is’! *So from the judgment of — the unconditioned judgment of ‘is’, the beingness of form and potency take their bearing. So when you say ‘is’, you are saying ‘is’ about the content of an insight, which is the understanding of the content of an experiencing. And that’s where that metaphysical parallelism of metaphysical structure comes from. You would expect that he is going to do something similar with the structure of knowing and doing.*

### **Method of Ethics**

**“An ethics results from knowledge of the compound structure of one’s knowing and doing.”**

(CWL 3, p. 23; see also p. 618).

**“Now the division and the hierarchy of values reveal how the dynamic exigence of rational self-consciousness for self-consistency unfolds into a body of moral precepts concretely operative in a moral consciousness.”** (CWL 3, p. 625).

After making his promise, the next place, or almost the next place, that we see him talk about the method of ethics has to do with this comment:

*“Now the division and the hierarchy of values reveal how the dynamic exigence of rational self-consciousness for self-consistency unfolds into a body of moral precepts concretely operative in a moral consciousness.”* (CWL 3, p. 625, emphases added).

*That’s all he says about it!* So, what do you think he means by that? ...

People read books on ethics — often come to books on ethics — looking for guidance; looking for guidance about moral right and moral wrong, about ethical right and ethical wrong; about what’s to be done, and what’s not to be done: *precepts!* At the very beginning — Here again you see *Lonergan with Kant in mind* — The very beginning of chapter eighteen reads as follows; so this is actually on page 618, the first page of chapter eighteen:

**“It may be well to note that our concern is not to draw up a code of ethics but rather to meet the relevant prior questions.”** (CWL 3, p. 618).

— one of which we saw was *freedom*, but also another of which is the question of *value*.

**“The present chapter, then, sets forth not precepts but *the general form of precepts.*”** (CWL 3, p. 618, emphases added).

That sounds just like Kant. The categorical imperative is not a maxim, it’s the form of a maxim. ... So where does Lonergan tell us about **what** the general form of precepts is going to be? Here is the place where it comes up. Having given an account of the division and hierarchy of values that reveals —

***“how the dynamic exigence of rational self-consciousness for self-consistency unfolds into a body of moral precepts concretely operative in a moral consciousness.”*** (CWL 3, p. 625, emphases added).

So let’s just look very briefly at the section that leads up to that remark. So on page 624, he starts talking about a *triple cross-division of values*:

**“They are true insofar as the possible choice is rational, but false insofar as the possibility of the choice results from a flight from self-consciousness, or from rationalization, or from moral renunciation.”** (CWL 3, p. 624).

*I think what that means is that they are true values in so far as they result from there being no further pertinent questions about value; and they are false in so far as they result from some interference, some bias that interferes with the unfolding of the*  
*“Is this truly worthwhile? Is this truly of value?”*

**“They are terminal inasmuch as they are objects for possible choices, but they are originating inasmuch as directly and explicitly or indirectly and implicitly the fact that they are chosen modifies our habitual willingness.”**  
(CWL 3, p. 624).

So *terminal value* is: you build a new operating system for a computer; you put something into effect by your practical insights, your practical reflection, but especially by your decisions; you put it into play, and it's *a value in the world*. *But by doing that, you have constituted yourself as the doer who actualized that value. So you always create two values at one and the same time: one is the terminal value that is, quote-unquote, out in the world; and the other value is yourself, at least in so far as the modification, the way that you constitute the value of yourself in this ongoing self-modifying way.*

**“Finally, they are actual, or in process, or in prospect, according as they have been realized already, or are in course of being realized, or merely are under consideration.”** (CWL 3, p. 624).

I think that is pretty straightforward. So there are *possible values*, *values that are in process*, and *values that are realized*.

**“Further, values are hierarchic. Objects of desire are values only inasmuch as they fall under some intelligible order.”** (CWL 3, p. 624).

So a little bit earlier on he has talked about **the notion of good**, and he has built — He takes this kind of circuitous route to talking about value. *The first meaning that people have of a good is that it satisfies a desire. And then he says that we've all got this great desire, which is the unrestricted desire; and that leads us to a different notion of the good, namely the intelligible — the order within which particular objects of desire can be produced and reproduced and distributed and made available for people who desire them.*

**“Objects of desire are values only inasmuch as they fall under some intelligible order, for the value is the possible object of choice, choice is an act of will, and the will is intellectual appetite that regards directly only the intelligible good.”** (CWL 3, p. 624).

Now that's a big mouthful!! Let's see — I remember the first time I read this, and I said: Does that mean that if I go to the refrigerator and get an apple, that it's not a value unless I figure out how to put it into an intelligible order.

*I think that what he is getting at there is that the value of the apple is constituted by my commitment to participate in a collaborative effort of a social order. What makes it be not just an object of desire, but a value, is that I, by my acts, choose to go along with a cooperative pattern that is my society. And it occurs not just dangling all by itself before my drooling chops as object of desire; it actually exists in an intelligible order that I partially constitute, along with the other people who constitute it, by our decisions to participate in it. And our decisions — that implicitly our decisions that “it's a good thing to cooperate together.”*

I had this experience a number of years ago of having been to dinner with my wife, and we were walking back to our car, and as we got a little bit closer: “Gee, we left the window open in the car. Why did we ... That was kind of silly, walking away from the car without closing the windows!” And we got a little bit closer, and we discovered that this was one of those days when

there used to be vents in the doors, so you can figure out how long ago this was. And somebody had smashed the back window and then reached down and rolled down the window, and then unlocked the car, and stolen a knack sack out of the car. The knack sack contained all the story tapes and song tapes that we used to put in the car for the kids.

[Class amusement]

*I was furious! I was absolutely furious, that they had taken my kids' tapes!! ... And being a philosopher I said: "Uhm, why are you being so furious about this?"*

[Loud class laughter, some words lost]

You can go to the store and buy some more, you know. *Why do we get furious about things like that?* As objects of desire they were relatively replaceable. There was a certain nuisance factor, but *the nuisance factor was not proportionate to the amount of fury that I had.* And after about, you know, five days of thinking these philosophical thoughts, *I gradually realized, you know, that what I was furious about was: I had made a commitment to a certain kind of social order, and this person had violated my commitment to the social order!!* And you can sort of do this yourselves and see if this makes any sense.

But I think that is what Lonergan is getting at. *What made those tapes to be values was not just as objects of desire, but the whole pattern of cooperative things that I commit myself to, from raising my family, to obeying the laws, and all these kinds of things.* And this son of a gun didn't make those commitments, and I was just furious at him! And, you know, the way Lonergan analyzes the "**individual bias**" back in chapter seven: this is a person who is relying on the rest of us who are saps in making these commitments, so that he or she can do something quite different with that pattern of arrangements. So I think that is what Lonergan is getting at.

Now, what has preceded this passage that I've just read to you is the discussion, which is really a kind of recapitulation of objects of desire and the good of order; and then there is a slight thing at the end about whether — But then there is this notion of value. And remember notion of value was not discussed back in chapter seven. So what makes value be value? Time Out everybody: we have to have a little discussion about will, willingness, and willing — *What makes value be value is that it is chosen.* But notice what he says at the beginning: it has to also be a *true value chosen. It's a value because what makes it be value is choice. What makes me being*

*an originating value, which makes me different than I was before I chose, is that I chose it! And what makes it be realized as an intelligibility that's of value in the world, is that I chose it. So the constitutive factor in value is choice. So he has to take this little time out to talk about will, willing and willingness; lots of really interesting remarks in there. But as the chapter unfolds, he's doing it so that he can get to his way of thinking about value. And what makes value be value is that it's decision, that it's a doing that's consistent with our knowing, that it is consistent with the judgment about the true value. Okay?*

Back to Method in Ethics. Why does this distinction which — Okay. So then, **“Values are hierarchic.”** They are hierarchic in the sense that objects of desire can be values if they are operating within something that is chosen, but in order for it to be chosen it has to be intelligible and unconditionally affirmed as worthwhile choice.

*Objects of desire are therefore conditioned by intelligible orders, which are conditioned by values as chosen. So the relationship of conditioned and conditioning establishes a hierarchy within values. Objects of desire are not dependent upon the basic values; they are the conditioned values that depend upon something more fundamental, namely, the goods of order and patterns of social agreements and arrangements of cooperation. And those in turn are conditioned by acts of human free and rational choosing. And the most basic value, therefore, is originating value. The most basic value there is, is the value that conditions the whole order of the values that are chosen.*

*That's Lonergan's way of talking about the inestimable value of a human person. What makes a human person more valuable than anything else is that a human person is the ground of the possibility of all other human values. It's the conditioning of all the other conditions. Then he simply says that: Now, okay, now we've got the basis for **“a body of moral precepts.”** A body of moral precepts about which he says nothing else. But you can kind of see what he is saying here. It is that the human person, precisely as the intelligent, reasonable, and rationally self-conscious and free, is the most basic value. And other values don't trump it. That goods of order are more fundamental and more valuable than goods of desire. That the upholding and the maintenance of social arrangements, agreed upon social arrangements, is of greater value than the actions of people who simply use and abuse such systems for the sake of getting what they want, what they have a desire for. So you get kind of a breakdown there!*

## Transition to the Ontology of the Good.

In the discussion of the division and hierarchy of values, Lonergan is claiming that everything originated by human choosing is good (insofar as it meets the exigence for consistency with knowing).

In the ontology of the good, he now expands that, to claim that *everything that is*, is good.

The key to his argument is that one cannot consistently choose as good the conditioned without becoming involved with also choosing the concrete conditions for that good, whether one realizes this or not.

And the universal order of emergent probability is the condition for every proportionate being, and is, therefore, good when *anything* is chosen as of value.

**“Act locally, think globally”** for Lonergan means acting in a way that is mindful of the implications for the emergence of the destiny of the whole universe.

This is the gist of Lonergan’s approach to the method of ethics in *CWL 3*, Chapter 18: **“The Possibility of Ethics”**.

Later on in the chapter he has an expanded section entitled the “Ontology of the Good”. And *his argument is that everything that is is good!* The argument back in section 1.3 was that everything humanly originated is of value. But *now he is going to make the argument that everything that is is good!*

**“The justification of this generalization of the notion of the good is that it is already implicit in the narrower notion”, [the human good]. “Objects of desire are manifold, but they are not an isolated manifold. They are existents and events.” (CWL 3, p. 628).**

Sort of apples, and bottles of Coca-Cola, and so on. They are not isolated. They have their conditions.

**“They are existents and events that in their concrete possibility and in their realization are bound inextricably through natural laws and actual frequencies with the total manifold of the universe of proportionate being. If objects of desire are instances of the good because of the satisfactions they yield, then the rest of the manifold of existents and events also are a good, because desires are satisfied not in some dreamland but only in the concrete universe. Again, the intelligible orders that are invented, implemented, adjusted, and improved by men are but further exploitations of prehuman intelligible orders.” (CWL 3, p. 628).**

So you can't go to town if you've got floods all the time, and you can't grow crops if there is not recurrences of rain patterns, and so on.

**“Moreover, they fall within the universal order of generalized emergent probability.” (CWL 3, p. 628).**

And so on and so forth. And then his final — the final premise so to speak in his argument is that

**“rational self-consciousness cannot consistently choose the conditioned and reject the condition, choose the part and reject the whole, choose the consequent and reject the antecedent. Accordingly, since man is involved in choosing, and since every consistent choice, at least**

**implicitly, is a choice of universal order, the realization of universal order is a true value.”** (CWL 3, p. 629).

Now that’s a big series of leaps there. But *the crucial thing to the argument is: If in fact you make a choice that is consistent with your knowing that this is truly a value, because your choice of value is a realization within proportionate being whether you want it to be or not, that means that you are making a choice on the base of a set of conditions that are given over to you, that are not of your own making, but of your own ability to do with them something of greater value; but by choosing whatever it is you choose to put into effect, you are implicitly choosing everything that conditions that choice; not only your judgment of value which is a condition for your choice, but everything else that is a condition for your choice.*

*And for Lonergan that means Emergent Probability, because Emergent Probability conditions every situation in every image that you can pull together to get a practical insight, and every bit of evidence that you can marshal in support of its agreeableness or its utility — so his argument is that implicitly, just as implicitly when I got angry about those tapes being stolen from my car — I was implicitly embracing the value of the complicated social patterns; so also every time we make a decision based on a true value, we are implicitly embracing the value of the whole universe.*

The phrase — it’s gone a little bit out of style — “Act locally! Think globally!” — Lonergan’s global thinking is really big! *It’s the whole universe!* Every time we act — So if we stopped at the point now where we started to make small decisions mindful of their consequences on the natural environment, *for Lonergan, real rational self-consciousness is to make decisions mindful of its effect on the emergence of proportionate being, on the destiny of the Universe! That is a heavy burden! That is a heavy burden!*

Okay. Let me pause there and see if people have some questions about this. ... So it would be nice if Lonergan had given us a few examples of — Well, okay, so what are some of these moral precepts? But you can see what he’s getting at here. *There’s some implicit ecological ethics in this. There is an implicit endorsement of the supremacy of the human person and its value. There is something in the hierarchy of orders of good, that the higher emergent beings, in some sense, have higher values than the lower orders of beings.* That doesn’t mean that you can do whatever you want with snails and worms just because they are little creatures, but *it’s something*

like that that he is getting at here. Now he felt that he had worked out the framework and left it up to us to put together this unfolding of moral precepts. But that I think is what he is getting at with this business about the Method of Ethics.

He comes to the Method of Ethics in a kind of a funny way: it is not — as I said, it is not what you would expect from the way that he says he is going to proceed. *The way that he proceeds to this part of his Method of Ethics is by way of talking about the goods of objects of desire, the goods of order, a little excursus on to willingness, and then a discussion of value, and then here we've got it!* There are a few things that follow from this, but *basically it seems to me that's his Method of Ethics.* Now, it doesn't look like this: [Pat gestures to the slide.]

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“Ontological Structure”  
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It doesn't look like that! But it sort of *is* meant to be like that! But he didn't proceed in that way!

Student question about how it is possible to do anything that is morally or ethically wrong, if the universe really is indeterminately directed?

This question is similar to a previous question as to whether meaning is greater than being.

The distinction between true and false values is relevant here.

A false value is a plan put into action without being motivated by a grasp of the virtually unconditioned.

What is put into play by such decisions is a social surd — a mixture of the intelligible and the unintelligible.

Pat: Okay. Let me stop there and see if people have some questions about that?...

Jonathan: So if finality is upwardly but indeterminately directed, how is it possible to do anything that would be morally or ethically — I'm sort of not even sure what word to use — 'wrong'? If — Yeah, it is difficult to see how anything that could be wrong could emerge into the field of being, and if it really isn't indeterminately directed, why it follows that one thing is wrong, or this one sort of action wrong versus another?

Pat: Well, great question! It's a version of a question that somebody asked, was it last week? Or the week before? ... And I'm going to mangle the way in which the question is asked; but the question was whether or not — Let's see if I can remember — *The question was whether or not meaning is larger than being, or not.* Or whether meaning is greater than being or not. And the question was posed, if I recall correctly, with regard to false judgments. So you can make a false judgment, and there's no correspondence between a false judgment and proportionate being. We had that discussion then, and my observation was that the judgment occurs within being, so being is more comprehensive than, or at least is co-extensive with meaning. The difficulty is that the judgment purports — the judgment as event — purports to be related to another event which in fact it is not related to. Or the judgment as an event purports to be about a thing which in fact it's not related to.

I think something similar would be the answer to the question that you are posing. *Lonergan does make this distinction between true values and false values, and he doesn't refine it at this point.* But a false value is a value, is a decision, or let's say it in this way: *A false value is a course of action that's put into operation that lacks the virtually unconditioned.* It would have been, I think, helpful to find, if I had scanned it, that business about the internal term. So it's a course of action that's put into action by the decision but is lacking in total intelligibility. The virtually unconditioned is the intelligibility that has been modified, and improved, and refined, by the addition of further intelligibilities. *And what makes for it to be a true value is a knowing that*

*is also done. It's not half-baked ideas also done. So what we put in play by doing that has this funny character that Lonergan refers to as the "social surd". It's half-intelligible and half unintelligible! There's some intelligibility, but it's lacking in intelligibility. It's some mixture of intelligibility and unintelligibility. And at the pre-ethical, pre-moral level, we've got lots of non-intelligibility. There are various coincidental occurrences which have some intelligibility, because there is an intelligible strain that is responsible for every event happening where and when it does; but there is a lack of intelligibility of all of them being there together. When human beings act on something less than full knowledge of what's obligatory or what's the right thing to do, we put into play courses of action that are lacking intelligibility. So I think that is what he means by a false value. A false value is something in effect that is presenting itself as value, but it is lacking in full intelligibility.*

Follow-up question taken from *Topics in Education*, where it seems that Lonergan is saying that defects in intelligibility lead to break downs. How is the discussion of obligatoriness related to that?

- Knowledge of obligation is reached at the end of the self-correcting process, where there are no further questions to further correct our course of action.
- When that is lacking, what is put into play is defective intelligibility which does eventually lead to breakdown.

Jonathan: So, how is that different from what it seems like in the *Topics in Education* lectures, it seems like he is setting up a — in one of these sections — it seems like he is saying that sort of failures of intelligence and reflectiveness in goods of order means that eventually the goods of order stop working. That the regularity of their occurrence breaks down.

Pat: Right.

Jonathan: How is what you are saying in terms of the underlying condition<sup>6</sup> and of say obligatoriness, different from that; or related to that?

Pat: Well, *the obligatoriness is the thing that is really unclear here*, so ... I think that what happens when we do what Lonergan calls “**practical reflection**”, among the reflections on the agreeableness and the utility and we run a shuttle through it. And quite often when we engage in that, we ask and answer a lot of further pertinent questions. And when we are serious moral agents, we don’t stop until we’ve answered them all. That means that what we are doing quite frequently is that the original course of action that we were planning to take, is being corrected, and modified, and made more intelligible, until it is made so intelligible that there are no further corrections to be made about it as what we ought to do. Okay.

Now — So that when we act that way, what we put in play in the universe is lacking in this destructive capacity that the unintelligible, the specifically human humanly originated unintelligibility will have. When you have a society where you have to put in so many protections against corrupt people, the capacity for that society to function well eventually breaks down. And that means that everybody that has put into play something that is a less than fully unconditioned value is setting conditions for the undermining of the conditional cooperation of the social order.

Jonathan: So just to make sure I’m understanding what you are saying: So then, so far as you are asking all those relevant questions, you reach a point where there is nothing left but to take the course of action, or not. And that is the point of decision, or where the radical preparation for decision is complete.

Pat: That’s right, that’s right! I know that this is the right thing to do; I know that not to do it would be wrong. *If I do it, I put in play a triple value and I transform myself as originating value in a very profound way. And if I don’t, the world is expecting an intelligible emergence, and it didn’t happen! And there is no reason why it didn’t happen. The reasonable thing to do was not done! So the world moves forward with a gap of intelligibility by my failure to have acted.*

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<sup>6</sup> The two or three words immediately preceding this point are not clearly discernable and “the underlying condition” is the transcriber’s doubtful conjecture only.

**Brief overview of the “Problem of Liberation”;**  
**fuller discussion deferred to the class on Chapter 20.**

Well, we're at the end of our time. I'm going to save discussion of the section on the “Problem of Liberation” as the lead in to chapter twenty. If you've read it, you know that *the problem of liberation is the problem of having a universal willingness, a willingness that is as broad, and as deep, and as rich, as the unrestricted desire to know; but while we are given that unrestricted desire to know as a natural endowment, our willingness has to come through the practice! And so that's the dilemma of human existence.* We are back where we saw at the very beginning of the class where Lonergan says of the statistical residue: it is good to say if it leaves sets of arguments off the board so that we can figure out what the real impediments to freedom are. That's where they are! *The problem of the natural sweep of our unrestricted desire to know, and the fact that we have to acquire a willingness to be able to learn and to cooperate with what we learn. That's the human condition as Lonergan sees it, and the dilemma that he leaves us with.*

So for next week, we'll go do chapter nineteen, and then we'll go the week after and get to the thing that will answer all the questions that I've been asked and didn't answer all semester, chapter twenty.

[Loud student laughter]

**End of Part Two of Class Twenty-Six.**