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Question: Takes issue with, or seeks understanding of, Lonergan's contention that historical investigations deal with meaning while natural sciences don't (so the questioner puts it).

Lonergan: The data are not meanings.

Question: Well, let's say a scientist is working in a particular area. There is a history to that area.

Lonergan: Well, if you're dealing with history, yes, the data are meanings. But the data proper to his science will not be investigated because so-and-so says so. He can say that so-and-so performed this experiment and made these observations and his conclusions are correct. But the data of physical science are physical observations.

Questioner: But they have meaning.

Lonergan: They have meaning after you understand them. But insofar as they're given – what's merely given is like Aristotle's *materia prima*. Aristotle defined his prime matter – it doesn't matter what nor how big nor what kind nor relation nor action nor passion nor place nor time nor ... nor habit – they were all the categories he could think of. And what falls under none of those categories is prime matter. You get something insofar as it's informed by the forms, insofar as it ... The data are never sharp. Data are always diffuse. To get them sharp, you have to have a concept, and to have a good concept, you have to have an insight. You say 'big.' How big? Well, you have to start using measuring rods.

Question (someone else): A teacher was primarily a structural ... interested in languages as interesting ways of constructing things, I guess. Is that an example of someone who by reason of having to work with texts, in this case particular biblical texts, uses the same data that a historian might use but not, or very little, finding meaning.

Lonergan: Well, no, insofar as he finds structure, he finds a meaning. The way he characterizes these structures, they're structures of meaning. Linguistic studies are highly positive. But still they're involved in meaning, and putting together all these different languages they have terrific command of the way meanings change and of the way sounds change, phonemes.