

Questions for November 1

- 1.) "...a historical fact...will have the stubbornness of what has been grasped as (approximating the) virtually unconditioned and so as something (probably) independent of the knowing subject."
Method, p.202

What is the meaning of the two parenthetical qualifications in this excerpt? Do they indicate:

- (1) that historical knowing doesn't quite measure up to the precision of knowing in mathematical and (natural) scientific inquiry?
- (2) that historical facts - either about the reliability of witnesses or about what was going forward - haven't the clarity and distinctness of facts about, say, the boiling point of water at a given atmospheric pressure?

If (1), is there a rebuttal to the (counter-?) position which holds that historians' work is always imperfect, so that even with the cooperation and mutual criticism of many historians, it is always relativistic? It would seem that even when the "crucial experiment" - in the chapter on Dialectic - is added, historical knowledge is relative; relative, that is, to the community of the converted.

If (2), are we as theologians faced with the problem Kierkegaard (among others) raises, namely that it is folly to base eternal salvation on the (unclear and indistinct) knowledge of historical events - Christian revelation being bound in some sense to a historical person?

- 2.) It has been said of Schleiermacher's methodology (with which Method, perhaps unwisely, has been compared) that it moves from "text to sermon" - roughly from Research to Communications. But Schleiermacher has nothing like Method's concern for History (in the sense of a functional specialty). He calmly passes from the New Testament to categories based on a psychology of religious experience, and ends up with preaching.

It can be inferred from the plan of Method that something is missing in Schleiermacher's procedure - perhaps lots of things, but certainly history as a way of knowing. But if the New Testament is accepted as revelation, it seems reasonable enough prima facie to "translate" its message without bothering about the reliability of witnesses or "what was going forward".

Is there a counterposition lurking in this assumption? Where?
ADVOCATUS DIABOLI

- 3.) Why is History the only functional specialty to receive two chapters in Part Two of Method?
- 4.) In the process of self-appropriation, what do you see as the role of the teacher? What sort of a person should the teacher be?
- 5.) On pages 434-437 of Insight you distinguish conjugate from central form and the distinction rests upon the differences in the acts of understanding needed to grasp them. Would you illustrate the difference between conjugate form and central form with an example from the functional specialty history?

Questions 11/1/79

- (1) a) Neither natural science nor history need attain certainty.
What the natural scientist names verification is, in fact,
no more than the absence, ~~at~~ for the moment, of falsification.

"If A, then B; but A; therefore B" is valid.

"If A and only A, then B; but A; therefore B" is valid.

But "if A then B; but B, therefore A" is invalid.

Scientific verification commonly is of the third type.

"If the hypothesis is true, then p, q, r,..."

But experiment and observation reveal p, q, r,...

Therefore, the hypothesis is true.

- b) Distinguish "relativity" and "relativism."

"Relativism" is the philosophic opinion that there are
no true judgments, no true opinions.

"Relativity" is the obvious fact that all judgments are
conditioned by a context; in so far as the context is mastered,
the judgment can be simply true; in so far as the context is
probably mastered, the judgment can be probable; in so far as
the context probably is not mastered, the judgment probably is
doubtful.

Prior to the acceptance of Einstein's special relativity,
Newtonian mechanics was assumed by scientists to be not only
certain but also necessary truth.

Subsequent to Einstein, Newtonian mechanics is not necessary;
it is true, other things being equal, when the velocity, v,
is ~~xx~~ small compared to the velocity, c, of light.

- c) Necessary truths cannot be deduced from contingent events, C.
Contingent truths cannot depend on contingent events, Nego.

The main basis for christian belief is stated in

Jn 6 44f: No man can come to me unless the Father draw him....

If any man listen to the Father and learn from him, the same will
come to me.

Jn 12 32: When I am lifted up from the earth I shall draw all men
to me.

The minor premise is the truth of these statements witnessed
by nearly twenty centuries of christian belief.

- (2) Distinguish "believer" and "theologian."

The theologian has the duty (as member of a scientific

