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Question: 'a historical fact will have the stubbornness of what has been grasped as (approximating the) virtually unconditioned and so as (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? [Lonergan read this far and then responded.]

Response: Well, with regard to mathematics, mathematics is ... hypothetical; in other words, it doesn't talk about reality; it talks about what you have to think if you're talking about numbers ... Mathematics is not knowing that $1 + 1 = 2$. It's know a lot of further things ... numbers carried to infinity and minus infinity ... These things are all certain but they're not about ... They're about the mathematical world, mathematical entities. There's the man who quit mathematics when they started taking the logarithm of the square root of -1. He thought that was going out of this world. Well, they'd been out of this work for some time ... Neither natural science nor history need attain certainty. What the natural science names verification is in fact no more than the absence for the moment of falsification. So when you're asking for verification, you're not asking for an awful lot. You're asking for something. If you recall logic: 'If A and only A, then B, But A, Therefore B,' is valid, but 'If A then B, but B, therefore A' is invalid. You have to have that 'If A and only A' to have a valid inference. But hypotheses are not normally in the form that 'If this hypothesis is true and only if this hypothesis is true.' So it's really an argument in the invalid form, affirming the consequent and denying the antecedent. If the hypothesis is true, then P, Q, R, X, Y, Z, and so on. But experiment and observation reveal that P, Q, R, and so on, are true. Therefore the hypothesis is true. Yes, the hypothesis has not yet been falsified by P, Q, R. The hypothesis may be about the relationship between volume temperature and volume pressure. You can set up all sorts of numbers. But setting up these numbers reveals that none of these cases falsifies the antecedent. They don't provide the antecedent.

Then there's a second part [to the question].

Question continues: 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?

Lonergan: Well, that is true enough. The scientist is dealing with sharply defined contexts, with all the necessary qualifications introduced, and if any of the

necessary qualifications isn't clarified, the experiment won't work. But he doesn't consider the hypothesis falsified. He'll say, 'Oh, this wasn't pure water.' ... So the work of the scientist is totally objectified. All that he presupposes, all that he observes, is stated. And anyone that finds ... any of the objections that come along ... The historian operates on the basis of all that he happens to know, and he can't objectify that. And it isn't the same as what everyone else happens to know. That's the basis of things like. perspectivism. And also history is endlessly complicated. As ... said, No one will ever know everything that happened in ... during the battle of Leipzig. Historians give you an approximate account of what was going forward at a given place and time. And that doesn't preclude that there might be other approximations. And some other approximations may be more helpful in a different context and at a different time.

Question continues: 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?

Lonergan: Distinguish between relativistic and relativism. Relativism is the doctrine that no statement is simply true, not even this one. Relativity is the obvious fact that all judgments are conditioned by a context. You say something, and someone says, 'Well, what about this?' 'Well, I meant it this way.' And you draw on your context to give a different interpretation to the interpretation he gives your statement. Is that context all that is there? One is never talking out of an empty head. Or if you are, very few people will take the trouble to disagree with you. Insofar as the context is mastered, the judgment can be simply true. But in history it is very difficult to master the context. There is constantly being added more to the context. That's why speculation on the coming election can become obsolete very quickly.

Question: At any given point in time, there *is* sort of an ideal towards which historians are attempting to approach approximately. There is something that was going on, that is true, and they're merely becoming more –

Lonergan: In the mind of God. But we haven't got the mind of God. So that's a discussion from a philosophical or a theological premise.

Question: ... the relativist who objects to your ... and says that there are always more questions –

Lonergan: Oh yes. In other words, a judgment, any statement of fact, isn't stating all facts. This idea that you must be stating all facts is the English transposition of German idealism, Bradley and Bosanquet. All relations are internal. You can't know any one thing without knowing everything else in the universe. And you never know everything else in the universe.

Now there are such things as internal relations. But they pertain to abstract subjects. A theory, a systematic theory, is a set of terms and relations such that the terms define the relations and the relations define the terms. But that is abstract. Any scientific knowledge we have is not – Every heavy body falls, but that heavy bodies fall is ... *caeteris paribus*, other things being equal. All natural laws are abstract. They hold *caeteris paribus*. If you have two roads, two superhighways, that intersect at right angles, and two motorcars traveling at 100 miles an hour, at the same distance from the intersection and traveling at the same speed, in the abstract, *caeteris paribus*, there's going to be a collision. But if an airplane drops an atom bomb on the intersection before they get there, there won't be a collision. If holds *caeteris paribus*. You can ... something that will prevent the collision. Insofar as the context is mastered, the judgment can be simply true. Insofar as the context is probably mastered, the judgment can be probable. Insofar as the context probably is not mastered, the judgment probably is doubtful. What else there is to the context we don't know, or at least the speaker doesn't know. There are other things that could be relevant.

More particularly, prior to the acceptance of Einstein's special relativity ... Newtonian mechanics was assumed by scientists to be not only certain but also necessary truth, the basis of mechanist determinism: the world consists of very hard little ivory balls that move in space under determinate laws, and the laws were necessary. Subsequent to Einstein Newtonian mechanics is not necessary. It is true, other things being equal, namely, when the velocity V is small compared to the velocity C of light. (Does board work to illustrate. Questions about his formula.)

Now in the second part [of the question], 'are we as theologians faced with the problem Kierkegaard (among others) raises, namely, that it is folly to base eternal salvation of the (unclear and indistinct) knowledge of historical events – Christian revelation being bound in some sense to a historical person?' Well, the text originally came from Lessing: you can't establish eternal truths from contingent events. And the answer is that necessary truths cannot be deduced from contingent events, we grant; if you want necessary truths, you need necessary events. But that contingent truths cannot depend on contingent events does not follow. When I happen to be intelligent and reasonable and responsible, it makes me stupid, silly, and irresponsible if I don't follow those natural propensities and exigences. But that's not impossible. It's a contingent event that I actually am. We have nothing else to depend on. The main basis for Christian belief – like, when

they talk about reliability of witnesses, and so on, they're taking a law court idea of historical truth – a law court is an adversarial situation, and they're trying to prove different sides of a contradiction. History is not that sort of thing. You're not looking for absolute reliability in the witnesses. What you're looking for is enough understanding of those witnesses to know what they're up to and what they're not up to. That's what critical history is. Critical history in the pre-critical stage was a matter of finding out which witnesses are telling the truth and writing their report up and working it into a narrative. And people you don't trust ... But the critical historian uses everything. Carl Becker said that he had abundant notes on the Russian *mir*. He had a whole section in his historical notes on the Russian *mir*. And later on he discovered that the Russian *mir* was a hypothesis produced by German historians, and that it didn't exist. So he transferred all these notes to his notes on German historians. It was still valid evidence, but for a different point, irrelevant to the Russian *mir* but very relevant to what to think of German historians. Critical history's ability to make use of everything: if it's not on the side of A, maybe it's on the side of non-A. And the historian is critical insofar as he's smart enough to be able to do that.

Now, [referring to part of a question] 'if the New Testament is accepted as revelation, it seems reasonable enough *prima facie* to translate its messages without bothering about the reliability of witnesses or what was going forward.' Well, there you have to distinguish between the theologian and the believer. The theologian – the main basis for Christian belief, more or less the major premise, is stated in John 6.44 ff. 'No man can come to me unless the Father draws him. If any man listens to the Father and learns from him, the same will come to me.' And John 12.32: 'When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.' And the minor premise is the truth of these statements witnessed by nearly twenty centuries of Christian belief. They have been drawn.

Now, what about this business of bothering about the witnesses and so on, historical inquiry? Well, you distinguish believer and theologian. The theologian, as a member of a scientific community, has the duty of requiring all the community – not himself but of some theologians, some group of theologians, investigating the Christian sources. No scientist checks all the conclusions of all preceding scientists, repeats all the experiments, finds out whether those experiments really occurred. What he does is, when he begins to suspect something, he starts checking on that particular result and works at that. The basis of belief is not something peculiar to non-scientists. It's essential to science. Science is an ongoing process, and scientists are not concerned to do again what was done by their predecessors but to add something to what they've already done. And where does he add it? Where he has reason to suspect some ... and then he goes back over that; and otherwise he does his own work ... remember the words of Max Planck, who in his

autobiography asked, What is it that makes a scientific hypothesis generally accepted? Is it the clarity of the hypothesis, the exactitude of the terms, the rigor of all inferences, the security of all the presuppositions, ...? It's when the present generation of professors retires from their Chairs. People don't change their minds because the young people think something different.

That's the thing in Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. When a new theory comes forward, at the start there's a general resistance to it. And then one by one scientists begin to go over to the other side. And when a majority has gone over to the other side, ... the field ... There was a book written at least 50 years ago on ... the scientists of the nineteenth century. And the theme was that *odium theologicum* was not confined to theologians ...

So, the theologians as a group have to do this work. They have to ask questions in textual criticism, in exegesis, in the history of doctrines, and so on. And that's what's new in theology since the German Historical School became effective and dominant. That's the inadequacy of Leo XIII's reestablishing the authority of St Thomas in 1879. It answered certain theoretical questions. But it didn't handle the problems of exegesis and history that became fundamental problems in the nineteenth century.

Now that's the obligation of the theologian. What about believers? Well, the believer, according to his education and culture, should have his questions answered and his doubts solved. He shouldn't go around with a thorn in his side. And it's up to the theologians and apologists, and so on, to deal with those thorns, but according to his education and his culture. There's no use going into the answers to questions that involve too much technical knowledge. Proving the existence of God is easy if that's all you want to do. But if you want to answer all the objections that all the philosophers have raised against your proofs, you have to know the whole of philosophy, and know exactly what those philosophers did.

Question: Why is History the only functional specialty to receive two chapters in part 2 of *Method*?

Lonergan: Well, Research doesn't receive one chapter, really. Interpretation is content with one chapter because I'm saying pretty much what Bultmann said. And Dialectic has one chapter because it's a subject that no one really has treated before, at least not in that way: what's the possibility of being methodical about judgments of value? Theology can't dodge questions of value. Other scientists try to, but the one group that can't are the theologians. My account of what history is depends on a personal theory of human cognitional activity that is not commonly known and commonly is outside the interests of practicing historians. It's a two-step exposition. First there are operations performed by historians, and specifically

the difference in operations between diary, legend, pre-critical history, and critical history, what is involved in critical history in particular. Methodical theology is not possible if all one knows about critical history is doing what the historians de facto do, because nobody ... of becoming a recognized historian and being able to say just what you're doing. And saying it involves you in a cognitional theory. It's bad enough becoming a historian without also becoming a cognitional theorist as well. If you don't know what critical history is, you'll never know whether you ... anything or not. You'll want to be critical because everyone says you must be critical. And what does that mean? Well, if it's doing what's already been done by people who are throwing out the gospels, and so on, you're stuck. You have to have a critical idea of what critical history really is. I don't mean enough of an idea to know exactly what to do when doing critical interpretation or critical history, but at least knowing in general what it is. Practical knowledge of it is a matter of practice. That's the first point. One needs an idea of what critical history is, at least a general idea, and what is the differentiation from pre-critical history.

Secondly, we need some justification from the opinions of historians and their differences for the position that has been taken. That's what we do in the second chapter, chapter 9.

Question: [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?

Lonergan: The question was asked at a university in Canada, and the majority opinion was, you have to know your stuff. That's fundamental. But the sort of person the teacher should be is increasing in authenticity through an ever fuller and more accurate self-appropriation, what Voegelin calls existing in the truth. So that's what the teacher has to do. And what is the role of the teacher in communicating self-appropriation and authenticity to his students? Well, it varies from the kindergarten to the graduate school. It's not the same thing all along the line. It changes. In the earlier stages of education it's a matter of encouraging and correcting, ... to ... if they had the measure of self-appropriation and authenticity that was needed at that time. Attaining the self-appropriation that fit their age and class. And secondly, by realizing that it is up to pupils and students to do what they can on their own. The teacher cannot do their self-appropriation. Either they do it themselves or it will never be done. You can cajole them, you can ... them into it, you can do anything you please. But they have to do it, or it's not theirs. It's just zero.

More details: For undergraduates to gradually open their eyes to their personal responsibility for themselves; so, on the one hand, the teacher doesn't try to do it for them, and secondly, gradually open their eyes to their personal

responsibility for themselves and, insofar as possible, to communicate a real apprehension and something of a theoretical grasp of what self-appropriation is. And for graduates, it's merely remedial. You try to make up for whatever deficiencies happen to exist – like remedial English. It's not a principal task but a supplementary ...

Question: On pages 434-37 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?

Lonergan: Well, note: you apply those distinctions of central and conjugate potency, form, and act to matter that has received its scientific explanation. You don't apply it to merely descriptive categories. That was the mistake of Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, and so on. The *sensibilia propria* for Aristotle were forms: the hot and cold, the wet and dry, and so on. They're not forms today. Why? Because science ... The metaphysics doesn't change, but science advances. You presuppose that science is explaining if you want to illustrate your metaphysics. And when science advances, you change your illustration but not your doctrine.

Now, with regard to history, in general history does not aim at setting up a system. The only part of history that is systematic is theory of history, analysis of history, such as progress-decline-redemption; being in truth, being in untruth, and pulling people out of their untruth, with all the consequences; you get them in chapter 7 of *Insight* and chapter 18 and chapter 20. And there, of course, the illustration is not simply in terms of conjugate forms but in terms of the appropriate intelligence and willingness and responsibility in a given situation, and the lack of it, all the ways of dodging it, of doing something that ... expect. 'You mustn't be an idealist. You have to take things as they are. You don't want to set up heaven on earth.' There are endless rationalizations. People are not as good as they might be, and situations are not as good as they might be, and they keep on getting worse because there are different people not being as good as they might be. And the situation becomes the norm. Machiavelli's great principle ... is that human affairs are not run by ... maxims. It's the ... that's far more efficacious. What we want is not moral precepts, which no doubt are excellent if they were carried out, but something that's efficacious in getting some ..., like the maximization of profit, the power of the trade unions, and so on and so forth, special interest groups.