

Class 6, October 12 2009

1 Research

Research is 'an enormously diversified category' but **one is doing research whenever one is making data available**. Lonergan has little to say on research, partly because it is so diversified. But he wrote later that perhaps he could and should have said more.

The methods proper to research are **learned only by doing it**, generally under the guidance of experts, and they will differ depending on just what one is doing.

1.1 General research and special research

General research is what is done by archivists, archeologists, curators, etc. It has its own ends: simply making data available; whereas one engages in **special research** as a means to working in some other specialty. General research 'locates, excavates, and maps ancient cities. It fills museums and reproduces or copies inscriptions, symbols, pictures, statues. It deciphers unknown scripts and languages. It collects and catalogues manuscripts, and prepares critical editions of texts. It composes indices, tables, repertoires, bibliographies, abstracts, bulletins, handbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias.'

1.2 Resolving differences

What are the relevant data for theology? Christian theologians have differed on the relevant data, especially regarding the tradition. Do they lie only in scripture, in scripture and tradition, in whose tradition? In tradition only up to a certain date, in the ongoing tradition?

The answer to such question is a function of doctrines, but each should begin where he/she stands, engage in collaborative work with others in open dialogue, and work out the differences. If the differences are brought out into the open, their grounds can be uncovered (Dialectic). Some of these will be eliminated by further research, interpretation, and history. Some will be seen to be a result of cultural differences and can be bridged by transpositions. And some may be rooted in the presence or absence of conversion.

2 Interpretation

2.1 Objective

127: The objective of interpretation is **to understand what is meant in the text**, and to grasp that meaning **in its proper historical context, in accord with its proper mode and level of thought and expression, and in the light of the circumstances and intention of the writer**.

Critical realist: possible to know w. probability or certainty the mg of a text by raising & answering all relevant questions. Ben Meyer, N.T. Wright, James Dunn

2.2 Learning and interpretation

Why is it that there is not a flood of books and articles giving an exegesis of Euclid's Elements, but an unending series of exegeses of, e.g., the fourth gospel? In **Euclid** one is dealing with a straightforward systematic statement about objects, where the meaning of each term is univocal and explained. **One has to study to learn about the objects**, but once one has learned geometry there are no exegetical problems with Euclid. But whenever a text is written in a **commonsense or artistic or religious mode different from one's own, and the more it includes symbolic and intersubjective elements, elemental meaning, and the more it entails the effective and constitutive functions of meaning, which open upon foundational issues, the more there arises the problem of interpretation.** 152: '... statements may be transported to other communities distant in place or in time. Horizons, values, interests, intellectual development, experience may differ. Expression may have intersubjective, artistic, symbolic components that appear strange. Then there arises the question, What is meant by the sentence, the paragraph, the chapter, the book? Many answers seem possible, and none seems quite satisfactory. **Such in general is the problem of interpretation.**'

Four factors have heightened the problem in our time: (1) world consciousness and historical consciousness, making us aware of many different cultures at the present time and of the great differences that separate present from past cultures; (2) the pursuit of the human sciences, where meaning in a fundamental category, and so interpretation a central task; (3) the confusion in cognitional theory and epistemology – interpretation is a particular case of knowing; (4) modernity and its ambiguities, not to be rejected or accepted wholesale, but demanding that interpretation be kept distinct from other specialties.

2.3 Exegetical operations

There are three sets of basic exegetical operations: understanding the text (sections 2-5), judging the correctness of one's understanding (sections 6-7), and stating what one judges to be the correct understanding of the text.

2.4 Understanding the text

Understanding the text has four main aspects, and they are aspects of a single coming to understand.

2.4.1 Understanding the object

The task of understanding the text has as its objective **'to know what happened to be the objects, real or imaginary, intended by the author of the text'** (156). There are **four conditions** for understanding what happened to be the objects intended by the author of the text. In discussing them Lonergan moves **from the more proximate to the more remote.**

Does this account for historical-critical and theological interpretation?