

# Bernard Lonergan's *The Triune God: Systematics*

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## Chapter 1 The Goal, the Order, and the Manner of Speaking

### 3. The Question or Problem

In the context of a study that looks at the phenomenon of human inquiry and which goes into greater detail about the kinds of questions that are asked, Lonergan engages in an analysis that focuses on the kinds of questions that are endemic to systematic theology and which are to be contrasted with other kinds of questions. At the same time, he gives an account or a little history which explains how and why systematic theology arose in the life of the Church in the time that it did and as a response to certain conditions which favored its appearance.

First, with respect to questions, Lonergan identifies three stages or points of transition which occur in the conduct of human inquiry. First, inquiry is identified as something which is both completely spontaneous and completely natural for human beings (to the extent that every human being enjoys a level or degree of conscious existence which transcends the life of a plant or animal). Beyond the sensitive psychology of animal behavior and existence, a rational psychology is to be distinguished in the life of human beings when human beings begin to wonder about the world that exists around them and about how they should fit into this world that they find themselves in. As Aquinas notes in his *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 3, 55 (which comments on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*), human inquiry (*inquisitio*) begins with wonder and wonder from a sense of ignorance that one wishes to escape from. Human wonder, by its very nature, anticipates that something is to be added to the data of one's sense experience or imagination. Cf. J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 22. In wonder a cognitive desire exists (cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 32, a. 8), a desire which is to be distinguished from any irrational forms of curiosity which want to understand causes which are of less importance than causes which exert a more primary influence in determining the meaning and existence of things which exist as effects stemming from causes (cf. *ST*, 2a2ae, q. 167, a. 1 & ad 3).

Second, when this wonder as an inner experience of puzzlement is put into speech or, as it is externalized in words that can be communicated to other persons and to one's self in a conversation that one can have with one's self, it comes to enjoy a specification and a differentiation which it did not have before. A person begins to identify more exactly what one seeks to understand and know. What is not understood becomes more well known as something that is not understood and what has yet to be understood becomes more well known as an object towards which one wants to move. A question becomes more conscious with its articulation and conceptualization and so it begins to enter a human culture and to inform a society as it becomes a focus of attention for more than a single individual. The asking of different sets of questions can be used as a heuristic for determining what developments have occurred in the history of any given society.

Third and lastly, when questions are posed because reasons are assigned for why they should be posed (reasons which specify why other questions should not be asked and why one must begin with an ordering of questions which says that, first, this question must be asked before this second or third question can be asked), questions assume a scientific or critical form which is the birth of science and philosophy. If questioning is to proceed in a more fruitful way than would otherwise be the case, it needs to be properly ordered. A strategy needs to be thought about; it needs to be postulated and evaluated; and then it needs to be put into effect. The inquiry needs to be more intelligent than what it initially was. In scientific inquiry, a vast ordering begins to occur, an ordering which is highly significant as a heuristic for understanding how Aquinas constructs his theology and puts things together as an initial understanding of things sheds light on other issues and questions.

Turning then to a question which now asks about reasons, the availability of different kinds of reasons explain why different kinds of scientific questions can be distinguished. As Lonergan has already noted (drawing on Aristotle and Aquinas), “what/why” questions can be clearly distinguished from “is it so” questions. Each seeks a different reason. Different rational principles are involved. However, if one wants to move toward a deeper understanding of these two questions, one should specify that questions about coherence act as catalysts for later questions which ask “what/why” and “is it so.” If later questions are to arise that seek for a deeper understanding of things, an experience of incoherence can be identified as a trigger for these later developments as disjunctions and contradictions are noticed in the meanings and understandings of things that one already has and which have been inherited to some extent within a tradition of meaning that is one’s home. For this reason, Lonergan is able to speak about three kinds of problem which can be revealed in the questions that one asks.

The first kind of problem asks about coherence in a context that is governed by strictly logical concerns. In logical thinking, one is primarily concerned with determining whether or not arguments flow from premisses to conclusions in a way that avoids contradictions. A logical argument is one which can admit that a conclusion states nothing that is not already found in the statements that are constitutive of one’s premisses. And so, for this reason, it can be said that the basic law of logic is A equals A; in other words, the principle of identity. If A equals A, A cannot be equated with what is not-A. From being and non-being (which exclude each other), or from what is and what is not, a principle of non-contradiction can be formulated which is to be understood as the most basic axiomatic first principle of human reasoning, a basic building block. Cf. *ST*, 1a2ae, q. 65, a. 2. The same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time in the same way. Cf. *ST*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2; 2a2ae, q. 1, a. 7. Truth is to be clearly distinguished from falsehood. Every contradictory argument is to be viewed as an invalid argument. In encountering contradictory propositions, their truth is not to be assumed or concluded to.

The reception and influence of Aristotle’s works on logic in 12<sup>th</sup> Century western Europe accordingly explains why the coherence of church doctrines became a major question and a topic of concern for Catholic theologians. Cf. Charles Haskins, *The Renaissance of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 345-6. In the *Sic et non*, the *Yes and No* of Peter Abelard (1079-1142), 158 theological propositions were both affirmed and denied with texts and passages being collected from the church fathers and arranged to reveal a wide range of real or apparent contradictions. Cf. Lonergan, “Lecture 2: The Functional

Specialty ‘Systematics’,” *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, eds. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 185. To cite some examples (cf. Haskins, pp. 354-5):

1. That faith is to be supported by human reason, *et contra*.
5. That God is not single, *et contra*.
32. That to God all things are possible, *et non*.
55. That only Eve, not Adam, was beguiled, *et contra*.
58. That Adam was saved, *et contra*.
106. That no one can be saved without baptism of water, *et contra*.
115. That nothing is yet established concerning the origin of the soul, *et contra*.
122. That marriage is lawful for all, *et contra*.
141. That works of mercy do not profit those without faith, *et contra*.
145. That we sin at times unwillingly, *et contra*.
154. That a lie is permissible, *et contra*.
157. That it is lawful to kill a man, *et contra*.

Arguments are then given by Abelard drawn from scripture, patristic writings, and reason in support of each contradictory proposition pro and con in a dialectical analysis which emphasized the existence of incoherence and contradiction and which thus cast doubt on the reliability of received church teachings. The Church’s theological tradition in its mass now became a problem which needed to be addressed in a way that could find principles of explanation which could resolve differences that cannot be resolved on the basis of an inquiry that restricts itself to only an application of logical principles.

In the subsequent work of Gilbert of Porrée (d. 1154), a theological question is defined: it is said to exist when one can prove “from authority or from reason that the same proposition should be both affirmed and denied.” Cf. Lonergan, “Systematics,” p. 185. Before the 12<sup>th</sup> Century ended, numerous commentaries began to appear which tried to effect reconciliations of one kind or another, the most famous being the *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, the *Four Books of Sentences*, of Peter Lombard (d. 1160) which has been described as “a compilation of biblical texts, together with relevant passages from the Church Fathers and many medieval thinkers, on virtually the entire field of Christian theology as it was understood at the time.” Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Lombard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Lombard). By way of a kind of opposition to Abelard’s dialectical approach, the object is a work of reconciling differences and disagreements which explains why Lombard’s *Sentences* became a standard textbook for theology until about the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Cf. Haskins, p. 357. Its four books respectively dealt with God and the Trinity, the Creation and the Fall, Christ’s Incarnation and morals, and the sacraments and last things. In the discussions which arose, a tripartite form or method began to structure all arguments and discussions: begin with a proposition, state the opposition, and suggest a solution. If a solution cannot be effected in a purely logical way, try some other way. Look for another method. And so, if one compares logical analysis which occurred in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century with the speculative analysis which began to arise in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, one finds that logical analysis reveals a certain limitedness. It serves to reveal problems and difficulties that can only be resolved by other kinds of intellectual activity, other kinds of intellectual operations. Logical operations should be distinguished from rational, non-logical operations. A methodology that solely relies on the laws

and principles of deductive logic should be distinguished from other kinds of methodology which rely on other laws and principles.

Beyond problems of coherence and before one can speak about the possible truth of any given theory or explanation as a problem of fact (the third kind of problem that Lonergan acknowledges), the problem of understanding presents itself as an appropriate intermediary. It is the second kind of problem which Lonergan discusses and which he identifies with systematic theological inquiry. As public disputations and the writing of numerous commentaries revealed a greater number of conflicts and oppositions and the inadequacy of *ad hoc* solutions that were proposed here in this context and here in another context, a context was created which urged the necessity of some kind of radical approach: an approach that could go to the roots of problems and difficulties and so begin to solve them. A general order of some kind needed to be introduced if the Church's teachings were to fit together in a tighter manner: in a way which could reveal a greater unity than what appeared to be the case so far. The many, different theological questions which were being identified needed to be ordered to each other in a way which could facilitate their solution: by identifying which question should be first discussed and settled, one could then determine which subsequent questions could be more easily understood and resolved because one has successfully dealt with an initial question. The solution which one has at the start could act as a kind of first principle. From it, one could solve all other theological problems by an order which, in itself, exists as an intelligibility which reveals a universal scheme of things.

While Lonergan speaks about an initial "extremely fertile act of understanding," the context is Aquinas on the meaning and role of wisdom as the virtue of the "wise man" (who, in this case, is to be viewed as the "wise theologian"). *Sapientis est ordinare*: "it is the part of the wise to order [and to judge; and since lesser matters should be judged in the light of some higher principle, one is said to be wise in any one order who considers the highest principle in that order]," *ST*, 1a, q. 1, a. 6, as cited by Leo Serroul in "*Sapientis est ordinare*": an interpretation of the *Pars Systematica* of Bernard Lonergan's *De Deo Trino* from the viewpoint of order, p. 35 (an unpublished dissertation presented at the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 2004). In Aristotelian terms, if one understands a first or highest cause, all other causes are understood in terms of how they are all ordered and related to each other and in terms of how they all rely on the mediating activity of the first and highest cause. The wise man knows how to order critical inquiry in scientific activity and which first principles should be invoked in understanding anything. The wise man knows how to order first principles in terms how they relate to each other. Hence, if any of us could begin from a simple unadulterated knowledge of God, we would be able to judge and arrange all things in an order that would be measured by divine rules or norms (*regulas divinas*) that are constitutive of an unchanging, eternal law which belongs to God alone (as the proper term of divine understanding and which is also to be identified with God's being as an unrestricted act of understanding). However, since, in this life, we do not enjoy such a knowledge of God, systematic theology begins with a created human act of understanding which presents itself as a breakthrough of some kind. From a seminal act of understanding, very many things can be understood in a whole which only expands if one's initial seminal act of understanding is able to incorporate other acts of understanding as these exist in other departments and fields and ways of life, and as one's initial act of understanding or first principle of understanding is more adequately and fully understood in its meaning and significance. Here,

Lonergan speaks about two “proper eventualities.” If one’s initial seminal act of understanding is, however, replaced by another act of understanding (by another, new first principle), a new systematic ordering of things is brought into being to replace the system that one had once known and applied. With respect to the inner nature of one’s initial, basic, seminal act of understanding, within it (whatever it is), a basic set of terms and relations is grasped in terms of how these relate to each other in a matrix which presents itself as a kind of closed circle. The terms define the relations and the relations, the terms. Then, by its application, very many solutions are elicited and postulated in a manner that works with common technical vocabulary which, as an outer or external word, is derived from an initial conceptualization that has articulated the meaning that has been initially grasped in the content of one’s first, basic, seminal insight.

To cite an example or two which could illustrate what is meant by an “extremely fertile act of understanding,” in Aquinas, such an act probably refers to an explanatory metaphysical insight which he had which apprehended a relation of mutual proportion respecting the principles of being or reality present in potency, form, and act. The meaning of each term is understood only in terms of how it is related to the other terms and vice versa. Terms and relations inseparably and mutually define each other in the context of one definition which one uses to speak of concrete things. As Aquinas avers, on the one hand, in the *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3, “what is intrinsically ordered to something else ‘cannot be understood apart from that other’.” Then, on the other hand, in the *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 9, 5, 1827-9, he speaks about how, by analogies grounded in things that we experience and know, one can grasp a meaning for these different metaphysical terms so that one has an explanatory first principle that can be used to understand the life of all concrete things which exist in our world. For example, in only one analogy, if one attends to the human experience of vision or sight, one can distinguish between eyes which are capable of seeing (potency) and sight as a nature or property which specifies what eyes are able to do (form); then, on this basis, one can distinguish between sight as a nature and seeing as an activity or operation (act). Form can be understood as a first act or second potency since, with respect to matter or potency, form is what informs matter or potency to specify what something is. Then, with respect to act, form is to be understood as a second kind of potency since, with the reception of act, a thing exists or it operates or functions. With respect to the things of this world, no form can exist apart from its instantiation in matter (potency). In cognitional terms, the form of a material thing cannot be understood apart from its union with matter. At the same time, since contingent things cannot account for their own existence, act as an act of being or existence is to be postulated as a principle which accounts for the union which can exist between potency and form. In Aquinas (and not in Aristotle), act supplants form as a more primary, foundational explanatory principle. The eternity of forms in Aristotle is replaced by an eternal, unrestricted act of being from which all things flow. With respect to an “extremely fertile act of understanding” in Lonergan, tersely stated, this probably best refers to an isomorphic structure that is postulated with respect how the order of being relates to the order of knowing and vice versa. The experiencing, understanding, and judging of human cognition is to be correlated to the potency, form, and act of metaphysics.

After speaking about the properties of a theological system (the properties of a theological ordering of basic terms and relations which is constitutive of an act of understanding in systematic theology), Lonergan speaks about three problems which can arise in theology that are

a source of difficulties which inhibit the ongoing development of understanding in systematic theology. First, at times, ongoing development fails to occur because seminal insights have not been well understood. What was understood say, by Augustine, Aquinas, or Newman, is not understood by later readers and students. Lonergan refers to a principle here that was frequently invoked and applied by Aquinas. *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 75, a. 5. “Whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the receiver.” Hence, in knowing anything, or in thinking that one knows anything, a thing is known by a prospective knower according to the mode of a knower’s being where what is understood and known is regulated according to how a thing is known by a knower. In the *ST*, 1a, q. 12, a. 4, this principle is stated in cognitional terms: “the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower.” *Cogitum...est in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis*. Hence, when later students of theology fail to enjoy the same acts of understanding that had been enjoyed by earlier theological thinkers within the theological tradition, they will employ a truncated understanding of things in a way that will only create distortions. Pseudo-problems are generated and, to address them, one’s mind is employed to try and find provisional solutions which create a new theological tradition, a tradition which jars with the received tradition and which emerges as a miscast tradition. Aquinas’s thought is replaced by Thomistic interpretations that present a sometimes consistent misunderstanding of things although it is claimed, at the same time, that everything is grounded in Aquinas’s true meaning. False controversies begin to emerge at center stage as inquiry moves toward apprehensions of meaning that lead to experiences of skepticism that encourage later disbelief.

To cite only one example which can be used to illustrate a very large and massive problem, in his *Divine Initiative*, Michael Stebbins attempts to explain one of Lonergan’s early works on grace, a Latin treatise, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum (On Supernatural Being: A Schematic Supplement)* which he had written as a kind of textbook for students. In Lonergan’s study which Stebbins analyzes, the dispute which irrupted in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century between Molinists and Bannezians about the relation between grace and human freedom should be regarded as a false controversy since it proceeded on the basis of a number of shared misunderstandings. To cite one example here, both schools of thought adhered to a theory of human understanding which cannot be squared with Aquinas’s stated views. When human understanding is understood as a vital act, it is said that human understanding causes itself. It is essentially self-caused or self-willed. Cf. Stebbins, pp. 107-110. But, the self-actualization of human knowing is not only a mistaken notion in itself but one which is doubly false if one tries to claim that it represents Aquinas’s understanding of human cognition. As Aquinas himself says, “the knower as such is not an efficient...cause.” Cf. *De Veritate*, q. 8, a. 6. Human knowing is not to be equated with the activity or efficient causality of agent intellect. Human knowledge is not essentially a product of human effort (as a human knower moves from not knowing or not understanding to knowing or understanding). As essential as is the reasoning process for moving toward understanding, no one can know if understanding will come. The absence of any guarantees accordingly distinguishes understanding from any kind of human making or human producing. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2. There is nothing which a person can do whose term is necessarily an act of understanding (even if an act of understanding is personally possessed by a knower when it is enjoyed) and so, as a consequence, understanding presents itself as a gift which can only be elicited (and not produced). It cannot be earned. While given to persons who ask questions, it is essentially received. Understanding is essentially a reception; it is a “being-

acted-upon.” Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 79, a. 2. It is an act, not an action. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 28, a. 3, ad 1; *Sententia super Physicam*, 3, 5, 320. While an action is something which is produced (it comes from a subject or agent as its source or point of origin), as an act, understanding is more properly a passion (*passio*). It is a passive potency. It is something which a subject receives or accepts. It is the act of a subject which exists within a subject who, as a patient, undergoes and experiences what is undergone and experienced (cf. *De Veritate*, q. 26, a. 1; a. 3; *ST*, 1a, q. 41, a.1, ad 2) but who can only receive certain operations according to the form or nature which specifies a subject’s operations in terms of what can be received and what cannot be received by a given subject. Cf. Stebbins, p. 107. “Act is limited by the potency in which it is received.” Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 147. And, every form possesses an inclination of its own which specifies what it may properly receive. Cf. *ST*, 1a2ae, q. 6, a. 4, ad 2. Hence, until understanding dawns, one must continue to work and hope for it and, until it dawns, one cannot say what one has understood. The receptive character of human understanding accordingly explains why Aquinas speaks of understanding as “movement to the soul” from an agent object instead of movement “from the soul” to outer things. Cf. *De Malo*, q. 6, a. un., arg. 14a. Intellectual knowledge is received from external things in a way which shows that understanding operates “from things to the soul,” *via a rebus ad animam*. Cf. *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 9. If the receptive character of human understanding is accordingly thus not understood, it will lead to a false notion of human autonomy (an exaggerated notion of it) and, as a result, God’s grace will not be understood with regard to its full efficacy.

Second, another kind of problem which arises to impeded the development of systematic theology has to do with how persons respond to theological systems which they encounter in the course of their reading and discussions with other persons and which have been created as explanatory theorems by theologians who are trying to seek a greater understanding about how the Christian faith hangs together as a whole in its intrinsic meaningfulness. While Lonergan admits that some persons may not have a good notion of order which is foundational for understanding what a system is and so they are encouraged to reject a systematic understanding of things, more saliently and seriously, systems of thought within systematic theology are rejected because some persons cannot distinguish a first operation of the mind which seeks understanding from the second which seeks to make judgments affirming facts or truths. As Lonergan so simply puts it, “they do not grasp what it means to understand” (p. 27). For some and possibly very many persons, statements of fact or conclusions about one thing or another are to be quickly arrived at. Snap judgments are very frequently made without much thought given to the value of engaging in prior, careful thought. This is true not only when second operations of the mind are made irrationally (with little attention given the saliency of evidence) but also when questions are not asked that can trigger first operations of the mind which seek an intelligible unity in things that is grasped only in an inward way by an act of the mind and not by any act of sense that can only outwardly grasp unities that are material (outward or external). In minds that are innocent of philosophic or scientific inquiry (who do not know what philosophy or science is), problems which exist within philosophy or science simply do not exist. And so, in the same way, for theology and in the life of the Church, the same basic kind of problem exists. Pragmatic, dogmatic considerations often tend to hold center stage. Systematic theology is not recognized for the tentative species of inquiry that it is and so, as a result, no attention is given to its possible value in the Church’s life. Its work is not encouraged. Its conclusions are often regarded with

suspicion and, at times, proposed meanings or understandings are rejected because they are confused with the necessity of belief in the truths of faith which belong to the Christian creed. To state this matter in another way, the necessity of belief with respect to matters of faith is not adequately distinguished from the provisional kind of belief that is urged by the intelligibility or the meaningfulness of a speculative understanding which is given in the work of systematic theology.

When Lonergan concludes his discussion here by speaking about a theological decline which occurred in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century when theologians narrowed their focus to disputes about what is absolutely necessary or absolutely possible in the divine scheme of things, for a deeper understanding of the issues involved here, one might look at what Aquinas and Lonergan have to say about the difference between absolute and conditional necessity. See, for instance, Aquinas in *ST*, 1a, q. 19, a. 3 & ad 1; q. 116, a. 3; and Lonergan in *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 106-8. Understanding the difference between the two (absolute, natural necessity versus conditional, hypothetical necessity) allows one to understand why logically motivated forms of inquiry focus on certain issues (or values) which are other than the ordering which is sought by systematic forms of inquiry in theology.

Third and lastly, when belief becomes a problem for some persons and certain beliefs are denied, an inquiry about them within the context of systematic theology loses its relevance and soon ceases to exist. Where no faith exists, there is nothing for a systematic theology to think about. If, in such a situation, there is to be some kind of inquiry or search for meaning, it tends to follow a line of inquiry which is engaged in some form of self-questioning. A person begins to wonder about what one really believes in conjunction with questions that ask about what one's life is really about. By effecting changes in one's self, one can begin to move into an altered conscious state and perhaps, by a conversion of some kind, a larger, new world of meaning is glimpsed and entered. Please note that when Lonergan refers to "Protestants, rationalists, liberals, atheists relying on humanistic optimism, modernists, existentialists, so-called 'critical' historians, and historical relativists," he is referring to points of view and outlook which he would regard as restricted and narrow if these points of view are compared to the apprehensions of meaning that can be given through the good work that can be done in systematic theology and which, to some extent, has been accomplished in the work of the past.

To give an example, if, for instance, one were to look at Aquinas's notion of providence and how he explicates this notion in terms of the relations between primary and secondary causes, one can come to a general understanding which can grasp a universal scheme of things. In the order of God's government (cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 15, a. 2) which exists in God's mind as a thought out idea or concept (cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 15, a. 2) and which includes more than what God wills directly with respect to everything which exists in the world, nothing falls outside a divine scheme of things in a complex dialectic which is constitutive of human history. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 22, a. 1, ad 2. Besides directly willing everything that is good and in the context of only directly willing the good, God indirectly wills the evil of natural defects and also the evil of punishment for sin (cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 19, a. 9) while also permitting moral evil to exist (cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 19, a. 9, ad 3) since, by all these means joined together, more good is brought about than would otherwise be possible. The indirect willing and permitting of God are themselves also goods since, by working through

secondary causes which can sometimes fail, God's power and glory are more fully and wondrously revealed.

In concluding his discussion of "the question or problem," after summarizing what he has been attempting to say, Lonergan introduces a point that had been made by Cardinal Newman in his *The Idea of a University*. Lonergan wants to speak not only about the value of systematic theology but also about its necessity, its conditional necessity if certain goods are to be attained and certain evils avoided. If efforts are made to discourage speculative reasoning that tries to gain some deeper insight into the meaning of the mysteries of the Faith, if systematic theological inquiry is discounted or avoided, it will engender an omission in human knowing which, in turn, will lead to a mutilation that, in turn, will engender distortions in what human beings claim to know since it is a completely natural thing for human beings to want to ask questions about the meaning of things, questions which seek to put things together and so find a deeper unity that can only be apprehended by a self-transcending act of understanding (as opposed to any act of sense). On this point, one can accordingly postulate that the birth of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment philosophy (which rejected the validity of any revealed religion as a guide to life) can be explained to some extent by the dearth of understanding in systematic theology. An overemphasis on certitude as the goal of one's theological understanding takes away from the kind of understanding that is germane to questions that ask about meaning and relations. As Lonergan had noticed, quoting Aquinas, certitudes (if this is all that one has) tend to lead to a certain hunger or emptiness in one's soul that can tell against the value of believing in the doctrines of faith that belong to one's religious tradition. Church teaching can come across as meaningless and, as meaningless, irrelevant. It then becomes all too easy to start looking toward other sources of meaning in a journey that can create a new culture within which one lives: a culture that turns away from higher orders of meaning that reveal transcendent spheres of meaning.