

Scriptural
hermeneutics,
ricoeur's thoughts,
and theological
method of lonergan



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Scriptural Hermeneutics, Ricoeur's Thoughts, and the Theological Method of Lonergan Answers. com defines scriptural hermeneutics as the study of the theory and methodology of interpretation of scriptural texts. This includes such scriptural books as the Bible and the Talmud. Paul Ricoeur was a leader of the hermeneutical thought movement. In addition to hermeneutics, his thought basically deals with two other philosophies: reflexive philosophy - the concept of self-understanding, and phenomenology - that objects and events are understood in human consciousness. Ricoeur felt interpreting texts, events, and symbols that showed the human condition was a necessity in order to obtain understanding. He argued that a final explanation, while it is able to complement understanding, “ does not answer the task of understanding” (“ Rocoeur”). By exploring this belief as well as other modern philosophies, Ricoeur made significant contributions and influenced scholarship not just in hermeneutics, but nearly all the human sciences. St. Thomas Aquinas’ theological philosophy was that knowledge is revealed to humans by God and is conditioned by humans in addition to being imparted by God. He believed both reason and faith were means to attaining divine truth. The principles he integrated into his philosophy were based on the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato. Aquinas’ views led to the philosophical school of thought called Thomism (“ Thomas”). Like Aquinas, Bernard Lonergan believed in the philosophy of Thomism. He strongly advocated that judgment was not subjective but objective. He also believed that reason as well as the proper practice of theology could lead to divine truth and a better life. Also, like Aquinas, Lonergan viewed theology as a science and desired to integrate theology and philosophy (Tracy, 299). One area that Lonergan differs from Aquinas is that his theological method focuses on self-
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consciousness, or self-transcendence, and how it plays a major role in human understanding. His theological method includes four levels of human self-transcendence that function in both retrieving from the past and moving into the future. These levels are: being attentive, being intelligent, being reasonable, and being responsible. His model describes the process of how a person improves their life by living at these levels of transcendence.

Lonergan felt acceptance of this model was necessary in order for philosophical and theological areas of study to progress. He felt that these areas were at a disadvantage compared to scientific fields where a method has already been firmly established (Dunne). On the other hand, Aquinas' theological focus is more centered on faith, divinity, the nature of God, and the Nature of the Trinity. He does not attempt to give an extensive model of the process of how people go about improving their lives as Lonergan does.

Overall, Aquinas and Lonergan seem to share more similarities than differences. Some scholars even view Lonergan as a modern day Aquinas; one who is trying to advance the views of Aquinas and integrate them into modern philosophy and psychology. They both seem to be after the same thing; which is the question of God, how it relates to us, and how we can discover who we truly are through theological reason and philosophical enlightenment. Works Cited Dunne, Tad. " Bernard Lonergan." lep. utm. edu.

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