

Bodhicarya-vata-ra was also discussed, and it was agreed that there would be such alterations (as Aquinas' work and approach to work was altered by serious reading of Aristotle), but that the nature of such changes could not easily be known in advance.

Next year's discussion of the second half of S'a-ntideva's work will also be prompted by Terry Tilley's reflections. You don't need to have been present at 2002's discussions in order to participate in 2003's, and if you'd like a copy of the text or of Tilley's 2002 paper, please contact: Paul Griffiths, Catholic Studies Program, University of Illinois at Chicago (MC 228), 601 S. Morgan Street, Chicago IL 60607.

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PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

- Topic: Contemporary Theory,
the Signs of the Times, and Practical Theology
- Conveners: Raymond J. Webb,
University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary
Kathleen A. Cahalan,
St. John's University School of Theology-Seminary
- Moderator: Raymond J. Webb,
University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary
- Presenter: Kathleen A. Cahalan,
St. John's University School of Theology-Seminary
- Respondent: Stephan Bevans, Catholic Theological Union

Paul Lakeland's work, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented Age*, describes three emergent critiques of modernity: the late modern, countermodern, and radical postmodern positions. He describes examples within contemporary philosophy and theology that comprise each position; in her presentation, Cahalan extended his argument by suggesting that these postmodern positions find a corollary in contemporary practical theology: the late modern position in Don Browning's fundamental practical theology; countermodern arguments support the idea of Christian practices in the work of Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra; and issues within the radical postmodern perspective are being explored in contextual theologies of Robert Schreiter and Steve Bevans. Cahalan described the way in which each type of practical theology (1) puts forth a particular reading of the postmodern situation based on an analysis of the Enlightenment's impact on Christian thought and practice, (2) constructive proposals to advance the Christian community's attempt to live faithfully in

secular post-Christendom, and (3) models of the Church's ministry with corresponding proposals for theological education.

Cahalan cites Browning's work as the prevailing late modern option in practical theology because of his revised correlational method. It is both philosophical and critical: practical theology begins in faith but proceeds to find valid reasons for articulating Christian beliefs and positions in a pluralistic world. Practical theology arises from the challenge to secular and religious practices, which demands the community to undertake an examination of their rationales, in light of its sacred texts and traditions as well as knowledge outside the tradition, particularly from the social sciences. Furthermore, Browning continues the late modern search for determining the formal and structural capacity for a universally situated reason. He defines practical theology according to a hermeneutic of practical reason, dialogue, and understanding; the community seeks to identify criteria and grounds for action through reversible thinking, which forms the basis for obligations of equal regard, mutuality, and agape.

The case for Christian practices has strong countermodern tendencies: it is confessional rather than apologetic, seeking to identify the narrative and linguistic aspects of religious faith in order to strengthen and sustain Christian identity in what is primarily hostile modern territory. The idea of practices derives mainly from MacIntyre's work on social practices and traditions; Christian practices are basic universal human activities that aim to address fundamental needs, yet find particular meaning when determined by the Christian narrative. Authors working on the concept of practices are identified in Lakeland's category of the countermodern because they are interested in *traditioning* communities of faith; they are not looking to the radically new or for new knowledge outside the Christian narrative, and they are not engaging universal grounds for dialogue. A strong countermodern assumption that informs the work is that the Christian metanarrative is, for the most part, in tact; wisdom from the past is the most vital element in creating a way of Christian life.

Even though there are few "radical postmodern theologians" in Lakeland's terms there are theologians, particularly liberation and contextual theologians, who take seriously *the questions posed* by radical postmodern thinkers. These "true postmodern theologians" are exploring the implications of "radical historicity" for Christian faith and life, the reality of the "Other," and the particular, local, and historically and culturally conditioned manifestations of religion. They agree there is no turning back to either premodern or modern grand theological systems. Steve Bevans has argued that all theology must be practical theology, embracing an inductive method that listens to traditional sources as well as voices from local churches around the world; it takes inculturation seriously.

In his response Bevans raised questions regarding the definition of a Catholic practical theology—two of Cahalan's examples are Protestant theologians who are creating practical theologies in response to the decline of mainline Protestantism. He identified several Catholics that fit the three categories and could

contribute to some of the weaknesses Cahalan describes in each position. Bevans also responded to being identified within the radical postmodern group by distancing himself from their most radical claims, while also confirming the need for theologies to emerge from particular contexts and cultures, as opposed to universal systems.

Issues raised by participants include identifying additional Catholic theorists in practical theology that fit the three categories; the use of missiology to develop a common theoretical language for dialogue among practical theology's specializations; reconceiving theology for ministry beyond the clerical paradigm; developing "denser" descriptions of practicality; recognizing the theological content of popular expressions in "nonchurch" language; and developing appropriate theoretical theological bases for academic ministerial programs.

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HANS URS VON BALTHASAR SOCIETY

Topic: Gnostic Return in Modernity
 Convener: David L. Schindler, John Paul II Institute
 Presenter: Cyril O'Regan, University of Notre Dame

Professor O'Regan explored and developed hints by Balthasar (in his great trilogy of *Herrlichkeit*, *Theodramatik*, and *Theologik*) that Hegel's discourse and the traditions of philosophical and theological discourse dependent on him might represent a privileged site for the return of Gnosticism in the modern period and thus call for the kind of extensive engagement and vehement resistance that marked Irenaeus's response to Valentinianism of the second century. The paper had three main movements. The first movement laid out Balthasar's resistance to Hegel's general authority, but with specific reference to the ways in which he rebuts

Hegel's teleological reading of the history of philosophy and his triumphalistic understanding of its relationship to art and religion. The second and largely complementary movement focused on Balthasar in the more combative posture of placing Hegel's own thought in lines of discourse presumed to be blighted, lines such as apocalyptic, Neoplatonism, and Gnosticism. The third and final movement explored the issues of the status of Balthasar's countergenealogies in which Hegel is hoisted on his own petard.

The paper's first movement essentially centered on Balthasar's discussion of Hegel's famous 'death of art' thesis prominently placed at the beginning of *Theodramatik*. It was argued that rebuttal of this thesis not only is the key to understanding the first volume focused on dramatic theory, but also in significant