

## FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY/METHOD – TOPIC SESSION

- Topic: “All You Who Labor...”: Theology, Work, and Economy  
 Convener: Christopher Hadley, S.J., Jesuit School of Theology Santa Clara University  
 Moderator: Eric Mabry, St. Mary’s Seminary and University  
 Presenters: Ryan G. Duns, S.J., Marquette University  
 Jonathan Heaps, St. Edward’s University  
 Ligita Rylisškytė, S.J.E., Boston College

In “No Orthopathy without Orthoaesthesia: On the Necessity of Negative Effort,” Ryan Duns begins with a positive appraisal of recent theological appeals to the notion of orthopathy (“right affect”) which are nonetheless hampered by a lack of conceptual clarity on how human emotions are constituted in experience and effect cognition. He looks to Iris Murdoch and Simone Weil to suggest that orthopathy requires a complementary notion of orthoaesthesia (“right perception”). Murdoch’s “unselfing” and Weil’s “attention” describe techniques of “negative effort” in anticipation of the revelation of the other, without which there is no development of “right perception.” In cases of systemic social injustice such as white supremacy and anti-black racism, the right perception that arises from such negative effort often takes the form of a profound disruption that leads in new creative directions. The task of theological reflection must be restructured as an act of listening and observing in humility and love rather than rushing to speak or win arguments. With such an attitude of negative effort, knowledge of the real under the light of the good is not possible. Morality and spiritual progress are, in this view, matters of right attention before they are matters of the will. In Johann Baptist Metz’s “mysticism of open eyes,” it is God who, in the Pauline words of Ephesians, accomplishes more than we could ever imagine.

In “Theology is a Body-Working: Embodiment and Economies of Collaboration,” Jonathan Heaps reimagines the unified work of theology as rooted in the metaphor of body-based skill development, that is, as an integral process of nourishing a differentiated unity of tasks. The effort of interpreting this process are often challenged by the tension between what Heaps calls “differentiating” (e.g. “contextual”) theologies and “unifying” (e.g. scholastic) theologies. In response to this often-notorious methodological dichotomy, Heaps asks: what is the basic and unifying objective of theology? In pursuit of this question, he looks to Bernard Lonergan’s theology of method and Jean Piaget’s cognitive theory to conceive of theology as a differentiated economics of “body-working,” one which is open-ended and other-focused, and yet guided by norms that allow for evaluation. Lonergan’s account of human knowledge is of a coordination of several tasks; but Heaps reminds his audience that method applies also to communities like the church, which is, according to the Pauline metaphor, a body. A dialectic of differentiation and coordination should ideally lead to a greater universality, not a lesser one.

For her paper, “The One Thing Needed in the Global Market,” Ligita Rylisškytė begins with Luke’s story of Mary and Martha in her integration of Bernard Lonergan’s notion of cosmopolis with British economist Nicholas Boyle’s analysis of global capitalism. In Boyle’s estimation, the current economic crisis is one of human identity

in the face of a “punctualization” of the self and a “compression” of time, resulting in an anxious consumerism on the one hand, and of the struggle for global citizenship amidst a lack of adequate international governance for meeting the political, economic, and cultural challenges of a globalized market on the other. The global market has additionally inaugurated a crisis of history, with a subsequent need for healing. Lonergan’s cosmopolis can aid in this historical process of human solidarity and mutually supported participation in freedom, the “one thing needed.” The cosmopolis integrates heightens labor, tasks, and moral, intellectual, and spiritual processes of conversion on a more global scale.

The lively Q&A that followed these presentations was elegantly summarized in the connections drawn up by Administrative Team member Jeremy Wilkins: “we have a nice arc of complementary pieces: [Duns’] ‘negative effort’ of attention, [Heaps’] unity in the complementarity of differentiated operations, and [Ryliškýtė’s] emphasis on self-surrender in love, with its intellectual orientation toward the ‘contemplative’ detour for the sake of ‘active’ return: thinking through problems in a deep and serious way, without rushing, without truncating the good. The question for us as educators, is how to resist (and help our students resist) the pressure merely to have something new to say and foster the one thing needful.”

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