

FREEDOM, COERCION, AND SELF-REALIZATION: VOICES
FROM 20TH CENTURY THEOLOGY – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: Freedom, Coercion, and Self-Realization: Voices from 20th Century
Theology
 Convener: Catherine Yanko, Catholic University of America
 Moderator: David Cloutier, Catholic University of America
 Presenters: Catherine Duggan, University of Notre Dame
 Catherine Yanko, Catholic University of America
 Darren Yau, Princeton University

This session featured three papers, each approximately twenty-five minutes in length, followed by a question and answer period. The questions clarified different aspects of the papers' claims and brought those claims into conversation with other scholars and historical events.

In her paper titled "Preserving Freedom in Love-Governed Civic Liberalism," Catherine Duggan contributed to ongoing conversations concerning political Augustinianism, civic virtue, and Christian ethical engagements with John Rawls. In *Politics & the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (2008), Eric Gregory envisions a liberalism that puts not justice, but the virtue of love at the heart of the enterprise. According to Gregory, re-centering love, properly trained, in a liberal democracy gives citizens a thick sense of responsibility towards one another and at the same time ensures that citizens exercise self-discipline such that they do not overwhelm one another with a love for an ideal that results in acts of coercion. The paper evaluated Gregory's arguments for love as a core virtue of Augustinian civic liberalism. Duggan argued that Gregory does not sufficiently explain how love moderates itself and does not give us a clear way to identify who is vulnerable, that is, on whose behalf we may exercise coercion. Additionally, though Gregory says he and other Augustinian liberals cannot expect everyone to confess Jesus is Lord in order to be good citizens and lovers, he in fact endorsed Augustine's position that love matures through spiritual *askesis* and a movement of the soul towards God. Subsequently, Duggan proposed a more promising way to uphold "love" as a civic virtue. She identified ways of exercising power over others that were endorsed by liberal thinkers and illustrated how Augustine's actions could be situated within the sphere of these acceptable uses of power.

In her paper, "An Ethic of Self-Realization According to Herbert McCabe," Catherine Yanko revisited a common twentieth century term: "self-realization." In the twentieth century, humanistic psychologists, continental philosophers, and some theologians were using the term in conversations about human flourishing, either as a description or as a normative ethical principle. Yanko evaluated the term in a theological context by presenting the use of it by Josef Fuchs, who developed a theory of self-realization in conversation with these psychologists and philosophers. This presentation of Fuchs's theory identifies strengths of the term, such as accounting for the depth of morality in terms of personal dispositions and the gift and relevance of personal identity in descriptions of morality. It also leads to a few hesitations with using the term "self-realization" in a theological context, such as a potential collapse of the

mysterious character of God and the misuse of the term “decision” to describe a moral disposition. Yanko made a subsequent proposal to retain the language of self-realization while escaping the presented hesitations through the work of Herbert McCabe. In Wittgenstenian flavor, McCabe presents a morality where the culmination of the moral life is in becoming more of oneself through the telling, and re-telling, of one’s life-story. Yanko concluded the paper by arguing that McCabe’s vision of freedom is more compelling in a Christian theological context than Fuchs’s.

In his paper, “Non-violence and the Problem of Political Coercion: Daniel Berrigan and Reinhold Niebuhr Reconsidered,” Darren Yau examined the problem that non-violent action poses to deliberative democrats who claim non-violence as the paradigm of democratic politics. Deliberative democrats want to defend a democratic form of politics, robust political equality, and the idea of respect for autonomy and often see all three of these projects as linked through defending the value of deliberation or speech as foundational to politics. Some of these theorists have argued that social movements that use non-violence resistance could be interpreted as paradigms of a politics of speech, rather than violence. Using various accounts of the Catonsville Nine action in 1968, Yau showed how coercion is a necessary part of many non-violent actions, and that the moral relevance of coercion in politics might be analyzed through Reinhold Niebuhr’s political realism. Yau concluded the paper by suggesting how inheritors of Berrigan and Niebuhr, despite their differences, could be unwitting allies in their characterization of non-violent politics against deliberative democrats.

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