

legal claim of a person or thing (a book) capable of convincing another person of some truth or the validity of a command and obliging him or her to accept it, even though that truth or valid character is not immediately evident." Walter then identified three criteria that determine the legitimacy of authority: authenticity which results from a sustained exercise of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility; the degree to which it is trustworthy and promotive of the common good; and the degree to which it preserves and promotes unity. Walter's fourth point focused on authorities in morality. Historically these have included Scripture, tradition, philosophical accounts of the human, moral principles or norms, a peer group, experts, moral teachings, and the magisterium. A key question under contemporary debate is whether or not the magisterium has the authority to teach the natural law infallibly. Finally the views of D. Maguire and G. Hughes were considered with respect to the role of authority in discovering moral truth. The former argued that authority is part of a system of reliance and trust that intensifies relationships and institutions. Additionally Maguire recognized that we need help in discovering truth. Hughes identified four criteria for a legitimate appeal to authority: whether (1) we have not satisfactorily resolved the question ourselves; (2) external grounds for believing the authority will be correct; (3) grounds for believing the authority are strong enough to outweigh the tendency to disagree; (4) it is undesirable to rely on authority when one can resolve the issue without such an appeal.

THOMAS A. SHANNON
*Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester, Massachusetts*

NONFOUNDATIONALISM AND CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

CATHOLICS AND NONFOUNDATIONALISM

Presenters: John E. Thiel, Fairfield University
James J. Buckley, Loyola College, Baltimore

The two presenters each read a brief paper. Thiel's paper, entitled "Nonfoundational Theology in Confessional Perspective," set out to explain the term "nonfoundationalism," to show some examples of nonfoundational theology, and finally to argue that the nonfoundationalist sensibility in theology must respect confessional differences. Buckley's presentation, "The Knowledge of God by

Mutual Grace," examined disagreements and points of convergence between his prior work on nonfoundationalism and that of Thiel, and proposed that the deepest question raised by their dialogue was in fact that of knowledge of God and the mutually supportive roles of reason and faith.

Thiel began by describing nonfoundational philosophy as a style of philosophizing rather than a school of thought, one moreover marked more by what it rejects than what it accepts. The critical sensibility of nonfoundationalism targets any form of thought that looks to find sure "foundations" for claims to knowledge. There are no timeless verities that reason can identify as indubitable supports for knowledge and, moreover, this should not be the cause for that "Cartesian anxiety" from which foundationalist thinkers suffer. Illustrating his points with brief examinations of the work of Wilfrid Sellars and Willard Van Orman Quine, Thiel showed how the nonfoundationalist thinker is untroubled by the relativity of knowledge. While there may be no epistemic foundations, knowledge works—and thus "means"—quite adequately.

Turning to nonfoundational theology, Thiel spoke principally of the work of George Lindbeck and Ronald Thiemann. Analogously to the nonfoundational philosophers mentioned above, these authors reject foundationalist theologies for what they perceive to be a lack of integrity. Concerned to mediate between religion and culture, foundational thinkers seek a common ground with culture that ends up in the demise of what is distinctively Christian. On the contrary, think Lindbeck and Thiemann, theology is intratextual, and its justification is to be found within a specific community of knowers. Influenced as much by the sociological judgment that Christians are moving into a post-Christendom age where their principal concern will be their own integrity and survival, not dialogue with secular culture, these nonfoundational theologians reject correlational models of the theological enterprise.

In his final section, Thiel pointed out how the nonfoundational theology described above is illustrative of classical Protestant sensibilities. Nonfoundational discourse is committed to the thorough contextuality of knowledge, and theology informed by this sensibility will illustrate the marks of its context, though Thiel believed that Lindbeck and Thiemann are not aware of the degree to which this is true of their own writing. But a Catholic nonfoundationalism would be far less unhappy with the apologetical dimension of religious discourse, since this attention to apologetics is internal to its community, just as the scripture principle is to classical Protestantism. The Catholic tradition abides by the anthropology of the Council of Trent, with its affirmation of human responsibility before God, a belief consistent with the practice of theological speculation. Thus, speculative insight might be far more likely to find a place in a properly nonfoundational Catholic theology.

Buckley's paper focused in the first place on a comparison of the previous work of Thiel and himself. Here he noted a contrast, which was not necessarily an opposition; while Thiel dealt with creativity in theological authorship, Buckley

followed Pascal's suspicion of that same idea, but in fact both nuanced their work in ways which muted the contrast. On the other hand, a larger disagreement might be discerned in their respective attitudes to the apologetic enterprise. Thiel, said Buckley, was proposing a revised method of correlation, and so conceiving of theology as an enterprise in which apologetics played a systematic role (using the categories of David Tracy), but he, Buckley, argued against the correlational model and for an ad hoc apologetics. Expressing appreciation for Thiel's latest work on nonfoundationalism, Buckley saw convergence between them in Thiel's clarification that correlation does not have to be foundationalist, and that noncorrelationist, nonfoundational theologies do not have to be fideist, if they insist on universal truth and ad hoc modes of justification.

Turning to his central point, Buckley argued that the true difference between Thiel and him was on the matter of "the knowledge of God by mutual grace." While they agree that Vatican I's teaching that reason establishes the foundations of faith is not an advocacy of foundational notions of right reason, each sees nonfoundationalism playing a different role in the mutuality of faith and reason. Thiel's version of the mutuality of nonfoundational notions of reason and Catholic theology shows clearly how ad hoc philosophizing respects the contextuality of Christian meaning, but does not explain the reciprocal contribution of theology in liberating nonfoundational thought from error. Buckley argues that it is to be sought in a trinitarian context in which the reciprocity of faith and reason is bound to a reciprocity that is internal to the character of God. The reciprocity between God and our world promised in the Word and Spirit "is the origin and ground and goal of our own need and power to be before and with each other." Thus the correlation is trinitarian and even eschatological, though how it can be both is an unresolved issue.

An extended discussion ensued. Among the issues raised were the place of ecclesiology in Catholic nonfoundational theology, the charge of isolationism often made against Lindbeck's thought and the possibilities of nonfoundationalism for promoting change, the bearing of more radical historicist forms of nonfoundational philosophy on theological inquiry, the room that nonfoundational thought leaves for absolute claims, the slipperiness of the term "ad hoc" in the discussion, connections between Buckley's proposal and a relational trinitarian theology, and the importance of an ad hoc appropriation of philosophical problematizing.

PAUL LAKELAND
Fairfield University
Fairfield, Connecticut
