

## THEOLOGY IN A SEMINARY CONTEXT

### PHILOSOPHY WITHIN THEOLOGY IN VIEW OF THE FOUNDATIONALISM DISPUTE

Presenters: Jack Bonsor, St. Patrick's Seminary  
Thomas Guarino, Seton Hall University

With Roger McGrath moderating, each presenter gave a short paper. As a supplement to my brief summary, I refer to their articles suggested by them as background reading.<sup>1</sup>

Jack Bonsor presented the question as follows: "In the face of historical consciousness, how can the unity and identity of revealed truth be maintained?" Bonsor suggests that our encounter with Jesus is always and essentially mediated through interpretations of interpretations, and that through these we do not get to some "core," some "real Jesus." To hold to some such core would be to privilege some interpretation of a particular time and culture, and thus place in the dark elements within tradition that do not fit this interpretation. It would be to "stop the show." To insist on a continuity maintained by a metaphysical conception of truth would be to give hegemony to a metaphysical reception of the faith. Bonsor calls upon Heidegger's view that world-historical contexts open up for us what can be seen and thought, and that "What is said and thought is intrinsically bound to the opening, to the context which makes it possible."

Thomas Guarino showed how philosophy functioned historically in theology in the tradition. For example, "The early Church recognized the importance of the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem—but, it was a cautious one—only those things were accepted which were in harmony with the Faith." This was true not only in the case of Origen, but later for Thomas Aquinas and John Henry Newman. This does not constrict the Church to one philosophical system. Henri de Lubac, von Balthasar, and others defended a philosophical pluralism against

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Guarino, "Between Foundationalism and Nihilism: Is *Phronesis* the *Via Media* for Theology?" *Theological Studies* 54 (1993) 37-54; Jack Bonsor, "History, Dogma, and Nature: Further Reflections on Postmodernism and Theology," *Theological Studies* 55 (1994) 295-313.

Scholasticism. Theologians and the Church use "philosophical positions in order to express more clearly the inner intelligibility of Revelation . . . but *always*, always within the framework of Realism." This comes not from a denial of history, but because theological realism "belongs to the essence of Revelation." Nonfoundationalists think that Catholic theology has not taken seriously "radical historicity and temporality that saturate and envelop human being and thinking." Guarino answers by affirming that foundationalism and realism are essential to protect the nature of revelation, because God has actually revealed himself. We must accept the historical character of the Christian tradition, but "God is not subject to history," and "these constructive and contextual elements" do not "completely govern content."

These papers were followed by an animated discussion in which some participants questioned the speakers about metaphysical realism and a stable human nature, about the stability of texts that shape us, and about symbolic realism, practical life and discourse, and preaching.

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## PRESIDENTIAL PANEL ON UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

### TEACHING EVIL AND HOPE

Presenters: Mary McGlone, Avila College  
Pat Howell, Seattle University

This was the second year that a session was devoted to the communication of theology in the classroom. Taking historicity and context seriously into account when teaching theology, the focus becomes the student. Both traditional and nontraditional students, as well as differing religious traditions or, none at all, present theological and pedagogical challenges which we explored.

McGlone began the session with a discussion of types of courses and typical students. However, the attitude of students toward evil and suffering is key, and she focused upon the radical plurality where there is an unwillingness by some students to make critical judgments about situations. Through the example of a