

THOMAS AQUINAS—CONSULTATION

Topic: Ecology: Theological Investigations
Convener: Anna Moreland, Villanova University
Moderator: Kent J. Lasnoski, Wyoming Catholic College
Presenter: Connie Lasher, Molloy College
Chris Thompson, St. Paul's Seminary

Connie Lasher presented a paper entitled “Integral Ecology and the Integral Development of the Human Person: A ‘Theological Investigation’ of Pre-Conciliar ‘Renewals’ in Thomas’ Metaphysics.” In this paper she argued that prominent streams of theological renewal that preceded the Second Vatican Council sought to recover and reinterpret the teachings and legacy of Thomas Aquinas. The not infrequently disputed nature of these reinterpretations notwithstanding, representatives of both *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement* intended to overcome extrinsicism through recovery of a Catholic vision of, among other things, what von Balthasar has called a “metaphysics of wholeness.” Connie explored selected aspects of pre-conciliar reinterpretations of Thomas’ metaphysics that have especial relevance in the development of an “integral ecology.” Finally, with particular attention to Chapter Six of *Laudato Si’*, she considered the *praeparatio* these renewals offer in their prescient insights concerning the human relation to nature and its significance for the integral development of the human person.

Chris Thompson, in his paper entitled “The Promise of Green Thomism,” argued that *Laudato Si’* has sparked a global conversation on the issues of environmental stewardship and our place within the created order. St. Thomas, too, pondered these issues deeply and gave to the Church a vital philosophy and vision of life. Thomism, (green thomism) Chris argued, can provide again a comprehensive vision of the person in creation in a way that elevates the best of environmental discourse and Catholic theological habits of mind. This move will not be simply a matter of repeating formulas, but of contemplating St. Thomas’ central convictions about nature and our place within it. In doing so, Chris argued, we can hope that Christ and creation is better known, loved and served.

Kent Lasnoski served as moderator for this session, but he also offered his own reflections on what it is like to teach at a Catholic college not only whose curriculum is structured around thomistic principles, but also which is grounded in experiences of being in the wilderness and outdoors, with required regular encounters with nature throughout the four years, encounters that are then digested and analyzed through the lens of Thomas’ philosophical and theological thought. The conversation thus turned from the theoretical to its practical implications on the collegiate level.

The conversation that ensued engaged both speakers, asking Connie about her retrieval of the Balthasar tradition, and asking Chris to elaborate further on his application of Thomas’ thought in the environmental movement. Both speakers engaged each other’s work during the conversation period that, as always, felt like it was cut short.

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