

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR—CONSULTATION

Topic: Passive Object or Partner in the Drama?
Creation in the Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar
Convener: Mark Yenson, King's University College (ON)
Moderator: Anthony Sciglitano, Seton Hall University
Presenters: Charles A. Gillespie, University of Virginia
Rodney Howsare, DeSales University

In his paper, "Ecology in the Scenography of the *Theo-Drama*," (read by Mark Yenson) Charles Gillespie explored the connection between von Balthasar's theo-dramatic scenography and ecology. Anything that occupies space on a stage acts as part of theatrical storytelling; design choices about costumes, props, and scenery sometimes mean more for an audience than any actors' virtuosity in performance. Scripture reveals a God who declares creation "good," and von Balthasar's theological presuppositions render these divine design choices meaningful in the unfolding drama of salvation history. Gillespie demonstrated how to see the form of von Balthasar's implicit ecological themes and suggested some theo-dramatic ethical norms: namely, environmental stewardship understood to be an expression of finite freedom in co-creative cooperation with God. By elevating non-human and environmental actors to the rank of "scene partner," ecological concerns demand human action.

In "Misology and Ecology in Balthasar and Flannery O'Connor," Rodney Howsare began with Pope Francis' observation in *Laudato Si'* that "human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to each other. . . the relationship has become confrontational." Developing an insight of Pope Francis, Howsare showed how this confrontation has its roots in a one-sidedly scientific approach to the natural world that places the subject over and against a purely passive object. Howsare went on to argue that Hans Urs von Balthasar and Flannery O'Connor provide, in their respective aesthetics, an alternative to modern misology, which simultaneously restores to reason its classical and medieval scope without in anyway gainsaying the fundamental mystery of Being.

A wide-ranging discussion followed the presentations, with questions about the doctrine of creation and the relationship between nature and grace, Christian humanism, and Flannery O'Connor's understanding of the grotesque and the beautiful.

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