

## NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY

- Topic: Towards a Theology of the Imagination  
Convener: John J. Markey, Graduate Theological Union  
Moderator: Nancy Pineda, Graduate Theological Union  
Presenter: Alex Garcia-Rivera, Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley  
Respondents: William Spohn, Santa Clara University  
Gary Riebe-Estrella, Catholic Theological Union

Alex Garcia-Rivera proposes that the most significant intersection between North American and Hispanic/Latino theology occurs on the question of how to do systematic theology in the context of a variety of religious traditions and cultures. He believes that the work of David Tracy has done much to advance an approach to this question. Especially significant is Tracy's suggestion for a theology of the imagination based on what he calls "the analogical imagination." Through use of the language of analogy, Tracy hopes to enable a meaningful public conversation across truly different religious-cultural traditions in such a way that traditions are not destroyed in the process. Garcia-Rivera believes that the key to the success of this conversation lies in Tracy's "optimistic" view of human beings. Furthermore, Garcia-Rivera further observes that Tracy's theological aesthetics rests on a similarly optimistic view of human beings. Garcia-Rivera however, finds Tracy's optimism problematic because in his opinion this optimism mistakes religious-cultural traditions as "views of life" rather than "ways of life." Garcia-Rivera believes that a new model of the imagination is needed to allow the genuine cross-cultural conversations that Tracy, and Garcia-Rivera himself, seek.

Garcia-Rivera believes that Hispanic theology may offer a needed corrective to Tracy because the Hispanic experience of pluralism presents a less optimistic view of human beings, but does possess an ultimately optimistic view of pluralism. This view is known as "mestizaje." "Mestizaje" refers to the violent and unequal encounter of cultures that resulted in a redemptive development of a new type of imagination that brought together multiple and very different cultures to form a new and unique way of life. This way of life comes about not so much from a conversation about values, but from a "change of heart" that allows a genuinely new type of conversation and ensuing practice. Garcia-Rivera refers to this type of imagination as "anagogical" in that it goes beyond reason to include the holistic interpretation of human understanding. Central to the

anagogical imagination is the presupposition of the capacity of the human person to be transformed in deep and profound ways. Garcia-Rivera elaborated on this proposal and discussed its implications for aesthetics and for other important theological concerns, especially for the "option for the poor."

William Spohn responded positively to Garcia-Rivera's presentation but raised two points for further discussion. First, whether Tracy's analogical imagination is actually as restricted as Garcia-Rivera presents it. Second, he raises the issue of whether a wider view of theological aesthetics needs to ground the author's view.

Gary Riebe-Estrella similarly appreciated the presentation, but raised some questions regarding the legitimacy of Garcia-Rivera's move to the anagogical imagination based on the concept of "mestizaje." Riebe-Estrella expressed strong reservations about the origination of "mestizaje" itself, and how this phenomenon functions in relation to the dominant culture. Garcia-Rivera believes that the real question for people of multiple cultures is how to negotiate strategically between the various cultures they inhabit rather than how to develop some new transformed culture that incorporates the respective distinct cultures.

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## PATRISTIC THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Spirit Is Moral Teacher  
Convener: John J. O'Keefe, Creighton University  
Moderator: Lauren Pristas, Benedictine College  
Presenters: James Le Grys, *The Thomist*  
 Julia Fleming, Creighton University  
Respondent: Michael Hollerich, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul

The intention this year was to move the patristic theology group toward greater dialogue with issues of contemporary systematic theology. Both of the papers in this year's section did this, though in different ways.

In his paper "God-Language and the Pedagogy of the Holy spirit according to St. Gregory of Nyssa," Dr. Le Grys discussed the way in which patristic theology, in particular Gregory of Nyssa's *Against Eunomius*, contributes to the contemporary debate about "god language." According to Le Grys, patristic