Disciplines, Interdisciplinarity and Theology

Agnes M. Brazal
Daniel Franklin E. Pilario, C.M.

Interdisciplinarity has become quite a popular word. Google gives you 5.9 million sites in 0.27 seconds for the word 'interdisciplinary'.[1] It comes around with a host of other variants made possible by differing prefixes (e.g., pluri-disciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, cross-disciplinarity)[2] which, by themselves, are also reflective of a specific linguistic formation common to postmodern and postcolonial thinking, e.g., border-crossing, transgression, liminality, hybridity, interface, interstitiality, between and betwixt, mestisaje, creolization, Third Space, etc. On the one hand, the discourse of interdisciplinarity is a timely theme in theological reflection as it engages with contemporary intellectual horizons. On the other hand, it also serves as a critique to the highly-specialized, isolationist and exclusionary paradigms of modern Western sciences. In a sense, it serves as a 'post' – not only in the sense of being 'after' something but also of being 'beyond' – highly 'disciplinary' worldviews.

Disciplines and Transgressions

Disciplines – understood as compartmentalized domains of specialized knowledges – is a distinctively 'modern' creation. The

1. Googling 'interdisciplinarity' in different disciplines bears an interesting detail: 'interdisciplinary theology' only displays 621,000 sites in 0.26 seconds while its counterparts in other sciences exhibits much more – 4.12M for interdisciplinary psychology; 3.34M for interdisciplinary sociology; 3.58M for interdisciplinary biology; 2.25M for interdisciplinary philosophy.

2. For this, see Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1990), 55-73.

principal feature of Western modern societies is the enhanced processes of differentiation in order to deal with the increasing complexity of its surroundings. Niklas Luhmann, a contemporary sociologist, argues that a system can only survive in a highly complex world if it also replicates within its own organization the complexity of its environs.[3] The more complex an organization is, the better can it respond to the demands of its evolving environment; but also the more potential for the system itself to survive and evolve. This is true for all modern social systems (politics, culture, economy, religion, etc.) but also for systems of knowledge (sciences).

Medieval knowledge dreams of totality, synthesis and integration. The curriculum of Carolingian cathedral schools boasts of a diversity of letters, arts and sciences (i.e., the *trivium* and *quadrivium).*[4] It served as a general educational program (*stadium generale*) which students were expected to have a sufficient knowledge about, being a requirement for their entrance in the university. The medieval university was in itself a 'little city' which engenders a union of minds expressed in the twin notions of *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (a community of teachers and students) and *universitas scientiarum*' (a community of disciplines of knowledge).[5] The purpose of these strategic places is the delivery of complete and comprehensive education toward the formation of an *homo universalis*.

But by the middle of the 18th century, this so-called 'universalistic' thinking had already begun to fade from the intellectual landscape. New social, economic and cultural development like the industrial revolution, technological progress, the evolution of modern sciences, necessitates specialized knowledges. The medieval faculties of theology, arts, medicine and law have branched out into new systems of *Wissenschaft* subsequently differentiated into new

3. Differentiation is the "replication, within a system of the complexity of its environs." Niklas Luhmann, *The Differentiation of Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 230.

4. The *trivium* consists of grammar, logic, rhetoric; and the *quadrivium* is composed of the fields of music, geometry, arithmetic and astronomy.

5. See Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 19-22; Olaf Pedersen, *The First Universities: Studium Generale and the Origins of University Education in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1998.

disciplinary domains and scientific institutions. Old research programs thus achieved disciplinary status: history in 1884, economics in 1885, political science in 1903, sociology in 1905. A host of other disciplines achieved formal status in the secularized universities. Disciplinary specialization, according to Martin Heidegger, is a "necessary consequence, and indeed the positive consequence, of the coming to be of modern science. The delimiting of object-areas, the compartmentalizing of these into special provinces, does not split the sciences off from one another, but rather it first yields a border traffic between them by means of which boundaries are marked out. These areas are the source of a special impetus that produces new formulations of questions that are often decisive."[6] Such questions engendered the discipline's delineated object of inquiry, investigated through its accepted methods, leading to the establishment of its own canons and recognized processes, in a word, normalization.

In Foucault's eyes, the act of normalization as seen in the institutionalization of disciplines also becomes an instrument of power. The "marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced – or at least supplemented – by a whole range of degree of normality indicating membership of a homogenous body but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank… It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as result of measurement, all the shading of individual references"[7] The move towards interdisciplinarity thus involves transgression – an action at the 'limits' of disciplinary boundaries, a "narrow zone of a line where it displays the light of its passage." "The limit and transgression," Foucault continues, "depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed

6. Martin Heidegger, "Science and Reflections," in idem, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays,* trans. William Lovett (New York: Harper and Row, 1977 [1954]), 170-171.

7. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondworth: Penguin, 1991 [1975]), 184.

a limit composed of illusions and shadows."[8] Interdisciplinarity thus presupposes disciplinarity; it lives on the presence of disciplines and feeds on them while endlessly transgressing them. We will come back to this later.

Theology and its Others

In the medieval *universitas*, *theologia* had assumed a central unifying role, that of, the 'Queen of the sciences'. To her service was its *ancilla* called *philosophia*. Among the four main faculties of the medieval university, theology acquired a place of prominence. It has occupied the throne from which she summons, indicts or condemns other disciplinary domains. But theology's relationship and its 'others' (i.e., other sciences) is more complex than that. We can outline this long and convoluted story of such a relationship in five differing models as it is played out through time.

A Refusal of Mediation

The new-found Christian faith must have been an overwhelming experience to new believers so much so that, on its horizons, all human reason fades. This was the experience of the early Fathers of the Church. The total meaning of one's life was found only in the Risen Christ and not in any other human systems of meaning. Tertullian – a Christian educated in the Greek classics – himself exclaimed: "What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem, between the Academy and the Church? Too bad for those who have embraced a Stoic, a Platonic, or a dialectic Christianity. As for us, we have no need for curiosity after Jesus Christ, or for research after the Gospel."[9] As expressed, this view of the "total sufficiency of Christ" (in effect, also the "total sufficiency of the Scriptures") which totally rejects any science to mediate the faith shows itself in

8. Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," in idem, *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology,* ed. James Faubion (New York: New York Pres, 1998 [1994]), 73.

9. Cited in Yves M.-J. Congar, *A History of Theology,* trans. and ed. Hunter Guthrie (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1968), 37. We are indebted to Congar in this section.

many shades and forms all throughout the history of Christianity, the most extreme of which is a contemporary Anglo-American theological fad – radical orthodoxy.[10]

The Hegemony of Faith

A total rejection of the so-called 'pagan' philosophy is seen by other early Christian thinkers as an impossible position. One could never escape from using the language with which their contemporaries explain their world. There is no other way with which the Councils, or individual Christians, explain their faith experience but through the same linguistic paradigms. Stoic or Neoplatonic terms and paradigms (e.g., *logos*, *ousia*, *emanatio*) thus found their way into the Christian vocabulary. But such recognition does not mean a grant of an equal position. Philosophy and the human sciences were considered mainly for their propaedeutic value; they were mere *preparatio evangelica* (i.e., preparation for the Gospel's coming). "Greek philosophy," writes Clement of Alexandria, "purifies the soul and prepares it to receive the faith on which truth constructs knowledge."[11] These thinkers still believed in the sufficiency of Scriptures; theology was still a *sacra pagina* but what is acknowledged is the role of the sciences in the elaboration of the Scripture's meaning. This position came to its eminence in Bonaventure's and Augustine's writings where faith served as life's all-pervading horizon. *Intellectus,* even as it is a necessary contemplative dimension, can only be understood in reference to this faith and never separate from it – a paradigm expressed in the now famous axioms which Augustine originally expressed in his sermons, *crede ut intelligas; intellige ut credas* (believe that you may understand; understand that you may believe). Such is the theological culture that saturates the whole of Medieval Christendom: that all arts and sciences 'belong to Christ' and should be made to 'serve its true Master'. Consequently, theology became the queen "who was

10. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999); John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001).

11. Yves M.-J. Congar, *A History of Theology*, 40.

served and chaperoned by the arts and sciences, her servants"[12] – thus, the well known 'handmaid' formula (*ancilla theologiae*) which almost amounts to a reduction of the arts and philosophy to theology.[13]

Philosophical Structuration of the Faith

Such a subservient position arts and philosophy occupy vis-à-vis theology in the medieval times was far from being monolithic. The introduction of Aristotle's writings into the medieval arena radically changed the dominant Neo-platonic theological landscape. Though Aristotle's work on grammar and logic were utilized earlier on by the dialectical theologians (Alcuin, Abelard, Peter Lombard), it was Thomas Aquinas who provided an eminent synthesis of Aristotelianism and Christianity. While the dialecticians brought theology under the regime of grammar and dialectics, St. Thomas delivered theology to the regime of metaphysics (thanks to the eventful translation of the Aristotelian works on psychology, ethics and metaphysics). Terms like 'essence and existence', 'matter and form', 'act and potency', 'virtues and habits', easily characterize the theological landscape up to the recent past. Aristotle then provided a scientific structure with which to think the faith in new contexts. *Theologia* has thus become a *scientia*. But what value has philosophical science in St. Thomas' theology? Some theologians think that Aquinas has 'evacuated' philosophy in favor of theology.[14] Most commentators, however, think that the Angelic Doctor gave philosophy its due autonomy. Unlike Augustine who considers human reason as purely subservient to the truths of faith, Aquinas believes that the human sciences explicate a truth about reality quite independent of revelation. Thus, in Aquinas's work, while theology is sometimes made to critique the conclusions of philosophy, his scientific

12. Ibid., 54.

13. "Reductio artium ad theologiam" (The Reduction of Arts to Theology) is a telling title of a letter of Gregory IX to the University of Paris and the brochure of Bonaventure. Ibid.

14. John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 19-59.

framework is also made to revise untenable theological assertions.[15] For Thomas, as for Albert the Great, his teacher, since things around us are endowed with intelligible consistency, the sciences based as they are on human *ratio* can be trusted. Philosophy is thus granted autonomy since its methods and its object – on its own – bring us to the truth of reality. Thus, the 'handmaid of theology' discourse which is also present in St. Thomas,[16] acquired quite a different sense from its original Augustinian context, for in order "to assure the services of her slave, theology begins by freeing her."[17]

The Hegemony of (Scholastic) Reason

In the wake of Aquinas, the Scholastic mind developed from the 14th – 18th centuries as it encountered new contexts: the Renaissance, the humanist movement, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The dialogue between *ratio* and *sacra doctrina* shifted to new emphasis. From being a commentary on the Scriptures and a disputation on the so-called 'truths of faith' via philosophical reason, theology is now co-opted by dialectics more concerned with methodic logic than with the truth of revelation. The 'quaestio'– a child of dialectics – started by Abelard and Peter Lombard consequently brought to perfection by Thomas Aquinas – was a significant step in theological method as it tries to ferret out the truth of the theological datum by the construction of *aporias*, i.e., two contradictory positions both supported by arguments. However, in the hands of Cajetan, Bañez, John of Saint-Thomas, to name the most prominent ones, the 'quaestio' has taken a life of its own, this time alienated from the

15. To illustrate this point, see St. Thomas's arguments against Averroes's position on 'the unity of the intellect' and his adoption of Aristotle's position on 'the eternity of the world' against his own colleagues in the Faculty of Theology in the University of Paris. See J. Aersten, "Aquinas' Philosophy in its Historical Setting," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas,* ed. N. Kretzmann and E. Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12-37. For arguments on dialectical Thomism, see also P. E. Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas,* trans. R. MacKenzie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970 [1957]); W. Hankey, "Why Philosophy Abides for Aquinas," *Heythrop Journal* 42 (2001): 329-348.

16. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, Q. 1, Art. 5, Ad 2.

17. Y. M.-J. Congar, *A History of Theology,* 107.

original Scriptural question and faith context. The texts of the Scriptures and the writing of the Fathers were then neglected in favor of the works of Aristotle and the Scholastics. Theology became highly speculative and metaphysical grounded as it is in the now prevalent "Christian philosophy" which later earned the name *philosophia perennis*. The role of faith then became a mere "preliminary, necessary to furnish the starting point, but truly borderline and extrinsic, while the real theological work is done by the simple application of metaphysics to this datum held as true."[18] In an act of rebellion to the hegemony of logic, theology began to branch out into new specializations: mystical and ascetic theologies distinguished themselves from scholastic theology, moral theology and apologetics from dogmatic theology (in order to be a theological resource in pastoral contexts). Other theological disciplines followed. However, such acts of transgression were at best ambivalent since, caused by the exigencies of the times (i.e., Counter-Reformation program), the method they employed were themselves co-opted by the same (neo)scholastic reason. By the end of 18th century, all these new disciplines had already assumed their place in the so-called theological 'manuals' whose method was easily structured into five recognizable parts: (1) thesis; (2) *status quaestionis* (exposition of opinions on the subject); (3) positive proofs from authority and from theological reasoning; (4) solutions of the difficulties; and (5) corollaries and application to Christian life and piety. Theology has traveled a long way – from reflection on the Scriptures, to a dialectical engagement aimed at theological construction, to a pedagogical program intended at explanation and apologetic demonstration.

Theological Dialogue-Partners

Due to the Counter-Reformation concerns of the post-Tridentine Church, Catholic theology found itself in reactionary mode, almost oblivious to the cultural ferment of the world around it. It has remained metaphysical, scholastic, ahistorical and dogmatic – true to its name of being a *theologia perennis*. It was Protestant theology

18. Ibid., 162.

which, at the onset of the 19th century, first attempted to dialogue with the new philosophical developments. Even as Thomas Aquinas's theology respected the autonomy of its philosophical 'other' (i.e., it freed its 'slave'), it still considered it as a 'handmaid' just the same – a slip quite revelatory of its own location. Contemporary theology, however, developed from a different footing. It sought the human sciences to be its equal dialogue-partner in understanding the world where God is said to reveal Himself/Herself. Schleiermacher and Barth, even as they positioned themselves in opposite sides of the theological divide, are one in seeking the philosophical worldviews of their epoch to elaborate their theological construction. Schleiermacher was beholden to Kant; Karl Barth to Hegel. Rudolph Bultmann, Paul Tillich and John Macquarrie dialogue with existentialist thought; Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, with neo-Kantianism and Martin Heidegger. John Cobb, David Tracy and Schubert Ogden engage with process philosophy while Edward Schillebeeckx, Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz with critical social theory. In recent years, theology engaged other sciences (sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, biology, cultural studies, etc.) in fruitful dialogues: liberation theologians with Marxism and dependency theory, feminist and postmodern theologies with deconstruction, African theologians with cultural theories, and Asian theologians with frameworks from ancient religions. Underlying all these engagements is the belief that if theology is 'faith seeking understanding', such 'understanding' cannot be a monopoly of the revealed word; it can *also* be discerned in the frameworks of contemporary sciences. Or, better still, the Word itself can *only* be revealed in the power and fragility of human reason.

Toward Interdisciplinary Theological Method

This anthology is an expression of our ongoing search for viable theological dialogue partners and a continuing exploration for ways of doing theology in our contemporary contexts. It is the fruit of the Third Annual Conference of the Catholic Theological Society of the Philippines, DAKATEO (*Damdaming Katoliko sa Teolohiya*), held in October 2006 in Cebu City, Philippines. The conference which gathered 28 member-theologians and guests, focused on the theme "Interdisciplinarity in Theology." All the nine articles in this collection

responded in various ways to the main question: How do we do interdisciplinary theology?

The first set of articles explores the differing reflections on method in contemporary moral theology: narrative-liberationist (Tuazon), evolutionary-aesthetic (Belita) and sociological (Dagmang) approaches, as well as the challenges in the interdisciplinary methodology of Catholic social teachings (Cartagenas).

Rolando Tuazon, in "Narrating Christian Ethics from the Margins," elaborates on two types of narrative theology and ethics. The postliberals, on the one hand, generally do not see the need to dialogue with other disciplines in understanding the Christian narrative which they regard as central to moral life. The liberals, on the other hand, view sacred Christian stories as infected with historical, philosophical and psychological concerns, thus the need for applying the methods of these disciplines in their interpretation. Integrating a liberationist perspective, Tuazon proposes a third alternative to narrative ethics which recognizes the indispensable role of narrative in the moral formation of Christians and affirms the need for hermeneutics and criticism of these narratives not only with the use of other disciplines, but also vis-à-vis the perspective of the "other".

The next essay, Jimmy Belita's "Grounding of Morals in Evolutionary and Religious Narrations," explores the possibility of theology dialoguing with the natural sciences, in particular, evolutionary theory, to understand moral values. He argues that moral values (e.g., altruism) and religious narratives can be grounded in evolutionary thrusts toward survival and perpetuation of the species. But biological evolution cannot explain everything. Aesthetic adaptation (initially based on utilitarian needs) can assume a life of its own and the values of religious narratives can at times, paradoxically clash with the evolutionary adaptations.

The next two essays intend to deepen interdisciplinary reflection on social ethics. Ferdinand Dagmang situates ethics within our liberal capitalist milieu through his engagement with contemporary sociological theories. In "Systems, Habitus and Ethics," he illustrates how the liberal capitalist system and *habitus* (predispositions of everyday life), pose limits to people's response to ethics' appeal. In pre-industrial societies, the spirit of reciprocity is fostered whereas in capitalist and post-capitalist societies, people have

mastered the art of civil inattention, as compassion and solidarity becomes more institutionalized. Indirectly, the article underlines the importance of dialoguing with the other sciences to understand better the processes of the capitalist system/habitus shaping our moral values.

Aloysius Cartagenas's article, "The Challenge of Interdisciplinarity to Catholic Social Teaching," critically evaluates the multidisciplinary and instrumental modes of scientific collaboration adopted in Catholic Social Teachings. Multidisciplinary collaboration leads to a simple juxtaposition of scientific results from different disciplines. On the other hand, the employment of the instrumental approach – where the findings from other disciplines are discerned or evaluated through the lens of the formal object of theology – stops short of allowing these findings to critique and enrich the Catholic Social Teachings. In the last section, Cartagenas identifies constitutive elements in any interdisciplinary collaboration: (1) dialogue in the common search for understanding what is human; (2) acknowledgement that no science has a privileged mode of knowing that is idol-free; (3) adjudication of contradictory claims through the communicative power of arguments; and (4) respect for the autonomy of the sciences.

The second set of reflections deals with interdisciplinary theological method on various grounds: Christological research (Echica), empirical-theological pastoral theology (Ponce), transcendental method of Lonergan (Garcia), and 'cosmopolite' theology (Bombongan).

Ramon Echica's article, "Inter-disciplinarity in the Current Search for the Historical Jesus," provides an expository account of John Dominic Crossan's use of other disciplines in his quest for the historical Jesus. He identifies the following as the marks of interdisciplinary conversation in Crossan: (1) interest in social history (cross-cultural and cross-temporal social anthropology, Greco-Roman history, and the literature of different sayings and anecdotes, deeds, concerning Jesus); (2) attention to non-canonical sources; and (3) appropriation of other sciences like archeology. In his interdisciplinary engagement, Crossan goes beyond the historical records written by the ruling elite and takes the vantage point of the ordinary people.

Rico Ponce's essay, "Interdisciplinarity from an Empirical-Theological Approach," brings us into the field of pastoral theology. He discusses the empirical-theological method in doing theology that is practiced in the Department of Empirical Theology at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands. In this approach, instead of relying on other disciplines to do the empirical research for theology, the pastoral theologian himself employs the method of empirical science to inquire into certain theological themes or problems. He then illustrated how he used this method in his research on the spirituality of Philippine migrants in the Netherlands.

In the article "Lonergan and Interdisciplinarity in Theology," Jesus 'Sonny' Garcia focuses on the role of interdisciplinarity in the transcendental method of Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan identifies a special role for philosophy as dialogue partner of theology. Philosophy, as the "ultimate ground of all interdisciplinary work," assists theologians to grasp the methods of the various disciplines and the dynamics of common sense. Interdisciplinarity is operative in the eight functional specialties of Lonergan's theological method: (1) in the mediating upward phase – research, interpretation, history, dialectic; and (2) in the mediated downward phase – foundations, doctrines, systematics, communications. At the center of all these specialties is a reflexive subject experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. Lastly, interdisciplinary theology is most articulated in what Lonergan calls 'integrated studies' where the transcendental method provides common norms, foundations, systematics, and common critical, dialectical, and heuristic procedures at the disposal not of a solitary theologian but of a relevant theological community.

After elaborating on the practices of interdisciplinarity in different theological fields and some proposed alternatives, Dominador Bombongan's paper shifts our attention to how a spirit of interdisciplinarity can be fostered in times of globalization. In "Cosmopolitanism, Globalization and Theological Education/ Formation," he argues that interdisciplinarity is enhanced by nurturing a cosmopolitan imagination or orientation. Cosmopolitanism involves a praxis of openness, a willingness to engage with the 'other' – whether these are persons, cultures, traditions, civilization, rationalities – for the flourishing of the *humanum*, which is in itself the goal of

interdisciplinarity. The essay concludes with a proposal for theological education or formation for Christian cosmopolites.

Finally, this collection ends with a fable that plays on the word "inter-disciplinarity" which, with a Visayan inflection, can turn into "enter-disciplinarity"! The essay of Lope Florente Lesigues, "Foucault's Fable: Under the Wings of Inter-Disciplinary Ruminations," not only promises to amuse those familiar with Foucauldian discourse but also offers an insightful analysis of the state of disciplinary processes in social institutions today.

A Reflection on Emergent Issues and Questions

These papers generated quite an interesting and spirited discussion. We will try to bring out some of the emerging concerns, issues and questions in the Conference and reflect on them vis-à-vis larger contexts and general trends in interdisciplinary studies, both in theology and other sciences. We single out three issues/questions: (1) a rethinking of contemporary locus theologicus; (2) disciplines and interdisciplinary theologizing; and (3) on transdisciplinarity.

Rethinking the Contemporary Locus Theologicus

In *De locis theologicis*, Melchior Cano (1509-1560) brought the term 'locus theologicus' to prominence within the theological field. Cano was trained in Scholasticism and wanted to make theology 'up to date' by avoiding the excesses of a stale Scholastic dialectical method practiced during his times. He was in polemics with a notion of theology that has only become a deductive structure of reasoning used to demonstrate some pre-determined conclusions (i.e., *theologia consequentiarum*). For Cano, a valid theology can only rest on the validity and richness of its positive datum, on '*auctoritas* – that reliable 'locus theologicus' which no sophisticated reasoning process can ever contrive. The scientificity of any theological enterprise is grounded on positively identifying and evaluating these sources (*loci*).[19] Cano singles out several *loci*: Scriptures, the Councils, the Roman Church,

19. For this, see T. Tshibangu, *Melchior Cano et la th ologie positive* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1964).

the Fathers, scholastics theologians, human sciences, philosophy and history. This theological method earned him the title, "Father of Positive Theology." From the perspective of the dual pole of theological reflection (e.g., human experience and Judaeo-Christian tradition), Cano's approach privileges the tradition's side. It was a timely reaction to an over-emphasis of autonomous philosophical science in late Scholasticism. But his program also became 'frozen' and stale through his emphasis on positive revelation. In another epoch, Karl Barth (1886-1968) expresses a parallel concern on the integrity of Christian revelation and tradition. He was in polemics with the 'natural theology' of Schleiermacher, the liberal Protestant tradition and even the scholastic method of Thomas Aquinas which, for him, are one in "compromising the transcendent otherness of divine revelation by imposing on it a conceptual straightjacket."[20] "One cannot speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice," says Barth.[21] But unlike Cano, Barth specifies the *locus theologicus* not in 'positive revelation' but in the utterly transcendent, dynamic and living Word of God as revealed in Jesus. The theological methods of post-liberal schools can be traced back all the way to Barth's initial directions. We traced this trajectory in order to bring out the fact that even on identical sides of the divide (tradition-side), *locus theologicus* shifted emphasis.

Modern Western theologies, from Karl Rahner onwards, locate *locus theologicus* on the opposite side of the theological divide, on the sphere of 'human experience'. Contemporary theologies of liberation, be it socio-economic, racial or gender-based, all agree on the same staring point – contemporary human experience. All the articles in this collection share in the same presupposition. However, in these essays, our authors point to some shifts even within the same sphere. The basic question asked is this: how does one best understand human experience today? The positions argued point toward some serious re-thinking of some cherished positions about *locus theologicus* in contemporary times.

20. Paul Avis, *The Methods of Modern Theology* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1986), 43.

21. Ibid.

Roland Tuazon agrees with the post-liberals on the centrality of narratives in theological reflection; yet unlike them, he privileges not so much the 'Christian narratives' but the narratives of the excluded 'others' to be the central determining force in his theological method – these marginalized narratives which are often suppressed by the global system and by dominant texts in both scientific or religious traditions. Jimmy Belita talks about the grounding of morals in 'nature' – one which he shares with the Scholastics' insistence on the founding of ethics on natural law. Unlike the Scholastics, however, the 'nature' that Belita talks about is not metaphysical but evolutionary. He argues that the 'ought' (ethical) can proceed from the 'is' (natural) – a position which is also against mainstream evolutionary thinkers from Darwin onwards. Against an idealist view of Christian morality which centers on the analysis of individual acts and personal motivations, Ferdinand Dagmang – with the help of sociological theories – proposes to see ethical discourse from the perspective of social structures and the *habitus* they engender in individual agents. Thus, a realistic approach to morality should also take into account not only the influence of moral visions and Christian ideals on individual Christians but also the workings of predominant structures in a certain period (in our case, capitalism) as they also limit what people can think, imagine, envision and do in their everyday life. Aloysius Cartagenas, for his part, challenges the Catholic Social Tradition to rethink its own sources. Instead of focusing on frozen 'semantic containers' of God's word as found in the Gospels or the teachings of the Church, he proposes to shift attention to non-canonical and non-written sources (e.g., social praxis, movements for liberation and solidarity, liturgy and music, etc.) to reveal to us the *humanum*. This can only be done in an interdisciplinary approach through which Catholic Social Teachings has to shed off its own pretensions to being complete and comprehensive, as a set of social ideals only needing application.

Ramon Echica is one with Cartagenas in alerting us to the need to look into non-canonical sources (people's histories, socio-economic issues, social hierarchies, etc.) as the new *locus theologicus*, in his case, in the contemporary search for the historical Jesus. Such a shift can only be possible when the theologian goes beyond textual exegesis (e.g., Meier's method) and engage with other sciences like

archeology, sociology, economics, etc., as John Dominic Crossan does. Rico Ponce proposes another methodical shift in the understanding of human experience. His quantitative empirical-theological approach (with the help of statistics) is a break away from the usual qualitative analysis of society, mostly from macro-sociological perspectives, which is prevalent in many theological methods today. Sonny Garcia's preference for Lonergan's method tries to locate the *humanum* not so much in objective social structures (asserted in previous methodologies) as in the inner depths of one's subjectivity-in-process. At the center of the transcendental method is our "own cognitional and moral being" which needs to undergo intellectual and moral conversion – that of the theologian included – if theology has to be authentic. "We are transcendental method," he proclaims. Jun Bombongan's essay opens new paths to understand the *conditio humana* of the 21st century. His analysis of globalization leads him to do away with culture-centered theologies (enclosed by the boundaries of individual nation-states, regions, races, languages, genders, etc.) quite prevalent in many inculturation and postcolonial discourses. He posits what he calls *cosmopolite* theology where contemporary Christians live with cosmopolitan consciousness, always mindful that one's world is the whole cosmos, always open to the different and the other in one's midst.

Nothing is definitive in all the above exploratory proposals; and there should never be. The human condition is so vast a reality which no one method can possibly capture. Beyond being immense, it is also continually in process. It only challenges the theologians to keep searching for the real or the Real.

WHOSE DISCIPLINE? WHICH INTERDISCIPLINARITY?

A host of issues and concerns regarding interdisciplinarity were triggered by the papers during the Conference. We can summarize them here by transposing them into questions: What is interdisciplinarity and what are the ways of doing it? How did theology as a dominant discipline marginalize others? Is it not theology which is the marginalized discipline today? What is it that unites or separates theology from the other sciences? What does 'inter' in interdisciplinarity mean? Let us reflect on these questions in two main

themes: (1) disciplines and marginalization; (2) types/levels of interdisciplinary interaction.

Both Lope Lesigues and Jun Bombongan refer to Michael Moran as saying: "Interdisciplinarity is only possible in a disciplinary world. The notion only makes sense as a reaction against, or an attempt to unify modes of knowledge presently separated into disciplinary domains."[22] But disciplines are here to stay. Put differently, there is no escaping from disciplinary specialization. Disciplines thus pose themselves as necessary evil in the production of knowledge; the more necessary they assert themselves, the more evil they become.[23] We have illustrated this in the history of theology's relationship with its others. As queen, she has wielded hegemonic power over her subjects, also drowning the latter's voices. Marginalization is a necessary consequence of dominance. Thus, the move toward interdisciplinarity is the 'mea culpa' of a dominant theological science towards its others. Some allude to the metaphor of the incarnation to describe it. More proper, however, is the image of a penitent kneeling in humility for the sins s/he has committed – a gesture done by John Paul II to the Jews and all the victims of the institutional Church over the centuries. To bring back Foucault's point into the theological realm, interdisciplinary theologizing is an act of transgression which "serves as a glorification of what it excludes: the limit opens violently onto the limitless, finds itself suddenly carried away by the content it had rejected and fulfilled by this alien plenitude that invades it to the core of its being. Transgression carries the limit right to the limit of its being; transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps, to be more exact, to recognize itself for the first time), to experience its positive truth in its downward fall."[24]

However, such a theological gesture is not an ecclesial consensus even in contemporary times. Many theological movements today also consciously aim to recoup the lost crown and to put

22. Michael Moran, "Interdisciplinarity and Political Science," *Politics* 26 (2006): 73-74.

23. Steve Fuller, "Interdisciplinarity: The Loss of Heroic Vision in the Marketplace of Ideas," in hhtp://www.interdiciplines.org/interdisciplinarity/papers/3/printable/paper (access 09.22.2007).

24. Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," 73.

theology back to the throne through some acceptable versions of the defunct *theologia perennis*.[25] These reactions are also engendered by the contemporary marginalization of theological disciplines. As consequence of the Enlightenment project, the secular sciences have dethroned theology and banished it from the public sphere.[26] From its place of prominence in medieval universities, theology does not occupy any place at all in the modern academe. If ever they do, they are transformed into departments of 'religious studies' or some neutral and acceptable equivalents. No wonder, even in interdisciplinary collaboration, theology is seldom called upon; it being benignly labeled as 'sectarian' (also read as 'non-objective', thus, also non-scientific). This partly explains why initiatives towards interdisciplinarity unilaterally come from theology. For their part, other sciences display a "when I need you, I will call you" attitutde vis-à-vis theology and religion. This also explains why interdisciplinary theology only remains at the level of 'borrowing' – which brings us to our next point.

Julie Thompson Klein identifies four types of interdisciplinary interaction between and/or among different scientific disciplines: (1) borrowing; (2) solving problems; (3) increased consistency of subject and methods; (4) the emergence of an interdiscipline.[27] First, 'borrowing' is an act of one discipline to borrow analytical tools, methods, models or concepts from other science to help solve issues in one's disciplinary domain, for instance, the use of game theory in evolutionary biology or of Marxist analysis in liberation theology. Second, several disciplines can come together in order to solve a common problem but without any intention to achieve conception unification. There are research issues (e.g., urban planning) which could not be answered by one discipline alone but only in the meeting of two or more specialized fields (e.g., engineering, governance, population studies, architecture, etc.). Third, there is also

25. See G. Loughlin, "Christianity at the End of the Story or the Return of the Master-Narrative," *Modern Theology* 8 (1992): 365-384.

26. Felix Wilfred, "Theology in the Modern University: Whither Specialization?" in *Theology in a World of Specialization,* ed. Erik Borgman and Felix Wilfred, *Concilium* 2006/2 (London: SCM Press, 2006), 24-32; Sheila Greeve Davaney, "Theology and Religious Studies in an Age of Fragmenttation," in Ibid., 35-44.

27. Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity,* 64-65.

a partial overlapping of disciplines in one material field which needs a certain sense of integration both in theory and method (e.g., overlapping of biology and physics in 'biophysics', or of psychology and linguistics in 'psycholinguistics'). Fourth, a new discipline can emerge out of the overlapping of disciplinary borders. This is also called 'structural interdisciplinarity' where a new branch of knowledge is created with its distinct subject matter, processes, methods, etc., in short, a new discipline.

Several articles in this collection attempted to tackle the types of interdisciplinary contacts among disciplines. They asked the question what does 'inter' actually mean? Cartagenas brings out three types, i.e., multidisciplinary collaboration, instrumental collaboration and interdisciplinary collaboration. While he favors the third because of its dialogical, convergent and respectful attitude towards its partners, he also shows that this remains a far-fetched ideal in the methodology of the Social Teachings of the Church. Most often, the social teachings have used the instrumentalist view which is the same as Klein's 'borrowing' type. Sonny Garcia's article mentions the notion of 'integrated studies' in Lonergan as a way towards interdisciplinary theology. It posits a theological interdisciplinary community with common norms, common foundations, common systematics and common procedures. But Garcia's conclusions still longs for that ideal and full integration. In the end, Lope Lesigues problematizes the integrative direction of interdisciplinarity. Klein's view suggests that the overlapping of disciplines lead toward the creation of new disciplinary domain which – with its new norms, methods, processes – also marginalizes and excludes its others. For Lesigues, what is redemptive is neither the 'inter' as separation nor the 'inter' as convergence but the interstitial 'thirdness', that surplus field, that "originary crack which ambivalently yearns and spurns the encounter of the other" in the advent of the 'great time'.

Interdisciplinarity for Whom? Toward Transdisciplinarity

There was one recurrent question that the Conference raised: for whom is interdisciplinarity? Who benefits from our

28. Julie Thompson Klein, "Prospects for Transdisciplinarity," *Futures* 36 (2004): 512-526.

interdisciplinary discourse? The question points to another category of interdisciplinarity. Klein identifies two types of interdisciplinary discourse: horizontal (one which crosses disciplinary boundaries), and vertical (one which runs across the world of experts, policy makers and practitioners to the world of the public).[28] The kind of interdisciplinarity we have discussed so far is horizontal, i.e., the relationship among disciplines. We have not yet asked the question: "Where is the place of people in our knowledge?" Helga Nowotny talks about transdisciplinarity where knowledge's inherently transgressive act traverses "from science to society as well as from society to science."[29] Scientific discourse has always been condescending 'as if people do not know,' thus, needing the popularized versions of our highly technical researches. But when disciplinary borders open themselves to be transgressed, when society is provided with avenues to communicate with science, science can never afford to be the same. Such a communication with people does not only aim at more effective application of our research results or at better ways to see the implications of our conclusions. Our concern is much more basic. A scientific discipline's contact with society is necessary to even influence the kind of questions we ask and the way we ask them. In fact, it is society which checks the validity both of our questions and answers. Pierre Bourdieu argues that all scientific theories *qua* theories are all products of 'intellectualist fallacy' – a 'scholastic point of view' made possible by the *skhol* , those leisurely universes where people can debate endlessly detached as they are from the life-and-death stakes of real praxis. "Science has a time which is not that of practice," says Bourdieu.[30] It is in this spirit that Nowotny challenges scientific disciplines to lay bare their researches not only to their co-experts (horizontal interdisciplinary) but also to the 'agora' (vertical interdisciplinarity). A reflexive science

28. Julie Thompson Klein, "Prospects for Transdisciplinarity," *Futures* 36 (2004): 512-526.

29. Helga Nowotny, "The Potentials of Transdisciplinarity," in http//:www.interdisciplines.org/interdisciplinarity/papers/5/printable/paper (access 09.22.2007).

30. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990 [1980]), 81. For his critique of the 'scholastic point of view', see idem, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Polity, 2000 [1997]).

is only possible when it realizes – through its encounter with the 'agora' or the 'rough grounds' – that its discourse can never truly and fully comprehend real practice. It is only those from the 'rough grounds' who can confirm the validity but also confront the hypocrisy of our theoretical constructs.

For whom is interdisciplinarity? There are implicit answers found in the individual essays. If the authors took great pains in scientifically elaborating an interdisciplinary theological method, it is with the view of speaking in behalf of and fostering solidarity with the oppressed and the excluded[31] through privileging the narratives of the excluded 'others' (Tuazon) and the victims of the post-capitalist machine (Dagmang); the sufferings of migrants (Ponce); the recovery of the silent voices behind the Scriptures, e.g., peasants, magicians, nuisances, nobodies (Echica); the opening possibilities for the survival of the 'weak' and not the fittest in the evolutionary process (Belita), and all "those banished from centric orbits and sanctifying grace including ghosts, martyrs, libidos, heretics, Sméagols, prophets, Kaballah, and yes, even dragons" (Lesigues).

Yes, but we still yearn for the 'great time' when the theologian's voice is no longer necessary to speak on their behalf because these silenced voices have already been empowered to speak for themselves.

Agnes M. Brazal
Maryhill School of Theology
New Manila, Quezon City, Philippines

Daniel Franklin Pilario, C.M.
St. Vincent School of Theology
221 Tandang Sora Ave.,
Quezon City, Philippines

31. This is an integral part of DAKATEO's Vision-Mission: "The *Damdaming Katoliko sa Teolohiya* or DAKATEO is an association of Catholic theologians in the Philippines, which develops and promotes theologies for a just and inclusive church and society. DAKATEO supports creative and scholarly theological research and its dissemination; promotes theological reflections and discussion on current issues and questions in society; fosters fellowship among its members and *solidarity with the oppressed and the excluded*. DAKATEO is specifically oriented to research and praxis from a liberative perspective that dialogues with varied contexts, disciplines, social movements and faith traditions."