

I have thought and spoken about the "basic problems of systematic theology." But in what sense, exactly, are theology's basic problems "basic"?

They are "basic" in the sense that they are the problems that arise and have to be dealt with, given the character of theology as a form of more, rather than less, critical reflection. More critical reflection in any form involves an appeal beyond all consuetudinary norms or criteria to the foundational authority of common experience and reason. But, then, the "*basic* problems" for any form of more, rather than less, critical reflection are the problems having to do with just how this foundational authority is to be appealed to in that particular form of reflection.

So the key to this answer to the question is Habermas and Apel's distinction between the two levels of communicative action on which claims to validity may be more or less critically validated: (1) the primary level of *interaction*, by appealing to the consuetudinary norms or criteria established in the pertinent particular context; and (2) the secondary level of *discourse*, by appealing to the foundational (which is to say, "basic") authority of common experience and reason as it pertains to that particular context.

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