

Philosophical Aspects of Global Order

Thomas Nagel

2008 Balzan Prize for Moral Philosophy

Balzan GPC Adviser: Salvatore Veca

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Affiliated Institution: New York University

Period: 2009-2013

Thomas Nagel is Professor of Philosophy and Law at New York University. The main aim of his research project was to explore the complexity of ethics and politics, while also supporting young researchers in the fields of philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and philosophy of science. Most of the funds were used to provide fellowships to enable visiting graduate students from abroad to spend time at New York University, to participate in the Philosophy Department's program and its Institute of Philosophy research activities as well as in the NYU Law School "Colloquium in Legal, Political and Social Philosophy", conducted by Thomas Nagel and Ronald Dworkin. The Colloquium examined scholarly work in progress on the issues of global justice, international human rights, immigration and national boundaries, and the relation between democratic legitimacy and judicial versus legislative supremacy. Students, younger scholars, and senior faculty members all participated in this program of ongoing discussions. For the four year duration of the project, several Balzan Fellowships were allocated annually to students coming to the Philosophy Department to spend a year as visiting graduate students. Every effort was made to identify scholars with the appropriate interests and abilities, so that such visits might provide them with an opportunity to greatly expand their intellectual horizons.

Each of the Balzan Fellows took two graduate seminars per semester for credit in the department, and also participated in the various colloquia and conferences sponsored by the Institute of Philosophy, the Philosophy Department, and the School of Law.

A further portion of the funds supported activities of the Institute of Philosophy, fostering research groups on topics of public concern that have an important philosophical dimension, such as “Science and Religion” or “Epistemology and Ethics of Disagreement”. During the spring term of 2010 the funds supported a research seminar, “Evolution and Ethics”, conducted by two assistant professors in the NYU Philosophy Department, Sharon Street and Laura Franklin-Hall. The seminar examined recent philosophical work concerning the relevance of evolutionary biology to ethics.

Funds were also used to support three NYU/Columbia Graduate Student Philosophy Conferences from 2011-2013. Finally, in the spring of 2013, Balzan funds were used to support a series of conferences conducted by the New York Institute of Philosophy, on the Foundations of Epistemology. The conferences brought together junior and senior scholars for intensive discussion of specific materials, presented by their authors.