

FUNDAMENTAL MORAL THEOLOGY: TRADITION

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J.

Theological ethicists around the world are turning toward history to comment on the method and arguments of earlier authoritative voices. The intent of this turn to the tradition is precisely to liberate theologians so as to find grounds for Roman Catholics to enter into greater dialogue with others around the world. To examine this development, the Note reviews recent research in narrative, responsibility, and virtue ethics, as well as related works on Christology and ethics and on globalization.

THE NOTE ON FUNDAMENTAL MORAL THEOLOGY has attended to, among other topics, its own history.¹ In recent years, attention to its tradition has been growing even more so.

Charles Curran's *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States: A History* illustrates the breadth and depth of that interest. At the outset, Curran comments on the problematic of moral theology: "Moral theology has always experienced the tension between a more practical and pastoral approach, associated especially with the sacrament of penance, and a more theoretical and academic approach, associated with the university world. This tension continues to exist in contemporary Catholic moral theology."² Unlike previous attempts to reduce the identity of moral theology to a

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J., received the S.T.D. from the Gregorian University and holds the Founders Chair in Theology at Boston College. Concentrating on history of theological ethics, virtue ethics, HIV/AIDS and ethics, he has most recently published: with Lúcas Chan Yiu Sing, "Bridging Christian Ethics and Confucianism through Virtue Ethics," *Chinese Cross Currents* 5.3 (2008); "Et Véronique au tendre lin passe encore sur le chemin..." in *Mystic Masque: Semblance and Reality in Georges Rouault*, ed. Stephen Schloesser (2008); and "From Teaching Confessors to Guiding Lay People: The Development of Catholic Moral Theologians from 1900-1965," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 28.2 (2008). In progress is *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (Continuum).

¹ See, e.g., James F. Keenan, "Moral Theology and History," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001) 86-104. Much has been done on tradition and sexual ethics, but those topics will be covered in next year's moral note.

² Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in the United States: A History* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2008) 3.

much narrower field of inquiry (usually the penitential approach),³ Curran sees both the pastoral and academic approaches as constitutive of moral theological investigations.

In studying the 19th century, Curran focuses on four notable figures: Francis Kenrick, Thomas Borquillon, Aloysius Sabetti, and John Baptist Hogan. Kenrick, founder of Philadelphia's St. Charles Seminary, wrote the first U.S. manual of theology, and his broad command of theology was matched by his own ecclesiastical authority as bishop of Philadelphia. Sabetti, a Jesuit from Naples who taught at Woodstock College in Maryland, saw 13 editions of his own manual, with another 20 appearing after his death. Borquillon, a Belgian diocesan priest, was Catholic University of America's first moral theologian; a progressive, he denounced manualism and befriended and influenced the liberal wing of the American hierarchy. Hogan, a Sulpician, was president of St. John's Seminary in Boston. Though he rarely published, when he did, he endorsed historical criticism. The foursome highlight not only the differences of seminary-versus-university education, or the mission of diocesan-versus-religious clergy, but also the broadly-conflicted theological and methodological differences that have been embedded in the nature of moral theology.

For the first half of the 20th century, Curran distinguishes between moral theology and social ethics. For the former, he again introduces us to many of the major teachers: the Dominicans Charles Callan and John McHugh; Jesuits Gerald Kelly and John Ford; and Redemptorist Francis Connell. These moralists move along the spectrum from pastoral to academic theology. From the world of social ethics we meet the diocesan priest John Ryan, the Sulpician John Cronin, and Jesuit John Courtney Murray.

Curran's *History* later takes an in-depth look at Vatican II, *Humanae vitae*, and subsequent developments in fundamental moral, medical, social, and sexual ethics. We see not only the themes and the debates but above all the architects, innovators, and detractors who animated those discussions.

The development of moral theology depends, then, on a number of factors: the contemporary concerns of the world and the church; the disposition of the seminary and the university to sustain inquiry; and the possibility of journals to engage and extend critical discussion. But above all there has to be a person, a theologian, whose formation, vision, and

³ John A. Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1990); Raphael Gallagher, "Das Gesetz Christi: Seine Bedeutung für die Erneuerung der Moraltheologie," *50 Jahre Das Gesetz Christi: Der Beitrag Bernhard Häring's zur Erneuerung der Moraltheologie*, Studien der Moraltheologie 14, ed. Augustin Schmied and Josef Römelt (Münster: LIT, 2005) 11–42; Norbert Rigali, "From 'Moral Theology' to the 'Theology of the Christian Life': An Overview," *Origins* 34 (2004) 85–91.

competency concretely restrains or provokes the development of moral theology. Curran's *History* acquaints us with those figures.

Like his *History*, this survey of recent fundamental moral theology highlights a renewed appreciation of the moral tradition per se. While readers might be alarmed at possible tendencies toward restorationism, we will see instead a very modest, but fairly widespread, interest in the writings of earlier theologians. Today's moral theologians seem fascinated with the thought and logic of earlier members of our guild. Not only do they engage the complexity of these earlier writers, but they find the turn to the tradition itself liberating, because inevitably today's scholars use the tradition precisely to move beyond it.

AUTHORITATIVE VOICES FROM THE TRADITION

A few instances highlight contemporary turns to earlier traditional voices. German theologian Rudolf Hein takes contemporary concepts of conscience (e.g., a "capacity for moral discernment" or a "juridical authority") and inquires how humanists like Marsilio Ficino, John Colet, and Desiderius Erasmus would understand these claims today. As such, they engaged their own historical predecessors as authoritative voices, and as they resonated with those voices we see in the humanists' positions the long-standing traditional defense of the primacy of conscience.⁴

David Clough and Brian Stiltner review just-war thinkers and, in a particularly helpful review of Hugo Grotius, argue that just-war thinkers have resisted using the enemy's intentions as grounds for going to war. Grotius, heeding Livy's warning that not until the sword has been drawn do we know the enemy's real plans, leads our own authors to conclude that "arguments for preventive war, whether in name or in any deceptive guises, should be rejected as incompatible with the just war tradition."⁵

The turn to the tradition, like Curran's own turn, is toward persons. When contemporary theological ethicists look to the past, they rarely, if ever, magisterially make affirmations such as, "this is what the church teaches and/or has always taught."⁶ True, in the last century many

⁴ Rudolf B. Hein, "Conscience: Dictator or Guide: Meta-Ethical and Biographical Reflections in the Light of a Humanist Concept of Conscience," in *Moral Theology for the Twenty-First Century: Essays in Celebration of Kevin Kelly*, ed. Bernard Hoose, Julie Clague, and Gerard Mannion (London: T. & T. Clark, 2008) 34–50.

⁵ David Clough and Brian Stiltner, "On the Importance of a Drawn Sword: Christian Thinking about Preemptive War and Its Modern Outworking," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 253–71, at 271.

⁶ An exception here is the essay by M. Cathleen Kaveny, who rightly explains that actions that were classified as intrinsically evil were not, in the tradition, equated with grave moral actions: "Intrinsic Evil and Political Responsibility:

moralists, particularly the manualists, made such claims. But today we understand the tradition as deeply human. As Jean Porter points out, the sources of a moral teaching are “components of a communal process of ecclesial moral discernment.”⁷

Charles Curran makes a similar point in a festschrift to Margaret Farley: “the Catholic tradition has consistently recognized that the truth about specific moral questions differs considerably from the truth about the ultimate meaning of human existence. To its great credit, the Catholic theological tradition has insisted on the importance of mediation—the divine is mediated in and through the human.” He adds, “The Catholic tradition has argued against going immediately from a truth of faith or a scriptural citation to a specific conclusion such as multinational corporations are immoral.”⁸

The English theologian Jayne Hoose makes a similar point when she refers to dialogue as tradition itself: “Simply resorting to pointing to a long-standing tradition and the deposit of faith in a purely historical sense does not respect the need for the past to dialogue with the present.” And she warns: “Such an approach is, therefore, contradictory in denying the tradition of dialogue and the need to be continually open to discernment through the Spirit. Dialogue allows us to stay open to revelation in the present.”⁹

William O’Neill entertains the questions of those whose voices have long been overlooked. He brings Margaret Farley’s ethics of compassionate respect into an understanding of traditional moral teachings. On church teaching on women’s ordination, he raises basic hermeneutical questions: “If, and to the degree the practice of not ordaining women rested on the prevailing belief in their natural inferiority, to that degree the practice does not cohere with the ‘obedience of faith’ (Rom 1:5; 10:8–10), that is, the ‘constant tradition’ of the church.” He adds: “For to preserve the coherence of the tradition with respect to human rights, we must disavow traditional practices that deny them.” He then turns to the person as source of moral truth and asks, must we not “appeal to the graces of discernment, that is, of compassionate respect recognizing

Is the Concept of Intrinsic Evil Helpful to the Catholic Voter?” *America* 199.13 (October 27, 2008) 15–19.

⁷ Jean Porter, “Contraceptive Use and the Authority of the Church,” in *A Just and True Love: Feminism at the Frontiers of Theological Ethics Essays in Honor of Margaret A. Farley*, ed. Maura A. Ryan and Brian F. Linnane (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2007) 369–405.

⁸ Charles E. Curran, “John Paul II’s Understanding of the Church,” in *ibid.* 429–52, at 440, 441.

⁹ Jayne Hoose, “Dialogue as Tradition,” in *Moral Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 57–66, at 63.

the ‘*individuum ineffabile*, whom God has called by name,’ in resolving the question?”¹⁰

From France, Alain Thomasset also looks to the tradition in a more empowering light. He sees that all our moral decisions depend on our own experience, a rereading of the tradition, and a renewed appreciation of biblical teachings. Thomasset looks to concrete social practices, like struggling against job insecurity, accompanying the dying, or living with religious differences. In this context, the Christian tradition leads us to appreciate the irreducible uniqueness of the individual, to live difference without fear, and to make ourselves mediators who cross borders.¹¹

Hoose’s emphasis on dialogue, O’Neill’s compassionate turn to the voices of those who have not yet been heard, and Thomasset’s strong conviction of the symbolic resources of the tradition highlight how any investigation of the moral tradition is at once a study of its humanity. From Scotland Julie Clague reminds us of this: “The Catholic moral tradition is not a dusty deposit of doctrinal documents. It is first and foremost something that is embodied in the concrete lives of people participating in human history.”¹²

The humanity of authoritative voices shaping the tradition is caught in a beautiful collection by two Dominicans, South African Helen Alford and Italian Francesco Compagnoni, who edit a volume about Dominican ethicists and social activists of the 20th century.¹³ The book is organized into two parts. The first considers the contributions of 17 individual members; the second part considers four provinces: Germany, Brazil, England, and Croatia.

Some of the writers are as noteworthy as the subjects they describe. Peruvian Gustavo Gutiérrez’s preface outlines the connection between Dominican spirituality and the promotion of justice. The late Servais Pinckaers writes on the Belgian Dominique Pire, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1958, having resettled Belgian and Austrian refugees, built the

¹⁰ William O’Neill, “Neither Thick nor Thin: Politics and Polity in the Ethics of Margaret A. Farley,” in *A Just and True Love* 453–79, at 468, 469. For similar turns to the individual, see Leslie Griffin, “The Second Great Argument about Freedom,” in *ibid.* 406–28; and Anne E. Patrick, “Framework for Love: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Christian Vocation,” in *ibid.* 303–37.

¹¹ Alain Thomasset, “Les pratiques sociales chrétiennes et leur force de conviction dans une société pluraliste,” in *Les communautés chrétiennes et la formation morale des sujets*, ed. Philippe Bordeyne and Alain Thomasset (Paris: Cerf, 2008) 259–88.

¹² Julie Clague, “Moral Theology and Doctrinal Change,” in *Moral Theology for the Twenty-first Century* 67–79, at 76.

¹³ Francesco Compagnoni, O.P., and Helen Alford, O.P., eds., *Preaching Justice: Dominican Contributions to Social Ethics in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Dominican, 2007).

University of Peace near Huy, Belgium, and moved to Bangladesh and India to inaugurate “Islands of Peace.” From England Aidan Nichols writes a fine essay on the socialism of fellow English Dominicans like Vincent McNabb and Herbert McCabe. Finally, Brazilian Carlos Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira captures the legacy of Bartolomé de Las Casas as it pertains to Brazilian Dominicans working to end corruption and dictatorship and then fighting for human rights in the Amazon and land rights throughout Brazil.

South African Stanslaus Muyebe writes on two contributions: Albert Nolan’s biblical sense of sin within the structures of sin and grace that emerge throughout salvation history; and Bernard Connor’s consciousness of the moral self, and the internalization of both the causes and effects of the structures of social sin. In the only essay by a sister, Ruth Caspar aptly describes the work of the intrepid American bioethicists Benedict Ashley and Kevin O’Rourke. Ashley, known for defending the life of the unborn, and O’Rourke, for protecting the dignity of the dying, eventually turn together to the issues of social justice, equity, and access to healthcare in the world’s richest country where nearly 30 percent of the citizens have no adequate healthcare coverage.

Finally, two other important works help us to assess the traditional contributions of two authoritative voices. The indefatigable Gerard Mannion edits *The Vision of John Paul II*¹⁴ and Thomas Nairn has assembled the 35 lectures of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin along with a companion collection of evaluative essays.¹⁵ As in the other works cited, in these two editions we see how the tradition goes forward through the wisdom of the voices that encounter the contemporary world and church.

AUTHORITATIVE VOICES WITH DIFFERENT METHODS

When referring to the tradition, theological ethicists want to know how did particular colleagues in other times and contexts think, what were their concerns, how did they develop their theology in the contemporary life of the church, did their opinions help others live the gospel and serve the world and the church, and were they able to offer signposts of the kingdom as they anticipated future horizons?

Surprisingly, we find that moral theologians held a variety of opinions, used apparently contradictory logic, and worked simultaneously in several disciplines with their own specific methodologies. For instance, last year

¹⁴ Gerard Mannion, ed., *The Vision of John Paul II: Assessing His Thought and Influence* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2008).

¹⁵ Thomas Nairn, ed., *The Seamless Garment: Writings on the Consistent Ethic of Life* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008); Nairn, ed., *The Consistent Ethic of Life: Assessing Its Reception and Relevance* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008).

we saw Julia Fleming's noteworthy manuscript on the probabilist Juan Caramuel, long dismissed as an irrelevant laxist. Fleming studied in detail how Caramuel actually wrestled with doubt and judgment on the issues of his day.¹⁶ More recently, she explores why in some works Caramuel denied the relevance of distinctions between probable and more probable opinions. She discovers that, when his task was to guide consciences, he was more interested in an understanding of agents and their perceptions than in the academic categorization of an action's moral character per se. When he was investigating the science of morals, however, he turned to his distinctions. Caramuel invoked different methods for different disciplines.¹⁷

This year Filipino moral theologian Eric Genilo has analogous concerns as he tries to maintain the evident ideological and methodological complexity of John Cuthbert Ford. Ford was innovative as he defended the selective objector's conscience and championed the claim that an alcoholic's struggles were more medical than moral. His classic critique of the World War II practice of obliteration bombing was brilliant, courageous, and singular. An evident guardian of conscience and the vulnerable, he was also an ardent champion of the immutability of the tradition whenever it was magisterially defined. Here Genilo follows Ford as he "persuades" Pope Paul VI to reject any change in church teaching on birth control. Like Fleming, Genilo rebuffs the tendency to explain an internal incoherence to Ford's logic; rather he proposes ways of understanding the different operating approaches Ford developed and in this way helps us understand how Ford actually reasoned.¹⁸

This appreciation of the diverse roles a moral theologian assumes (teaching the science, forming consciences, guiding church hierarchy or local leaders toward normative teachings) as well as the eclecticism of a moral theologian's own thought and use of resources are well captured by English historian of moral theology Martin Stone in his essay on Adrian of Utrecht (1459–1523), the last non-Italian pope to precede the late Pope John Paul II. By considering a variety of moral problems entertained by Adrian, whose approaches influenced the faculty of Louvain University,

¹⁶ Julia Fleming, *Defending Probabilism: The Moral Theology of Juan Caramuel* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2006).

¹⁷ Julia Fleming, "Distinctions without Practical Effect: Caramuel's *Apologema* and *Dialexis de Non-Certitudine* on the Standard Classifications of Probable Opinions," in *Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz: The Last Scholastic Polymath*, ed. Peter Dvorák and Jacob Schmutz (Prague: Institute of Philosophy, 2008) 87–98.

¹⁸ Eric Genilo, *John Cuthbert Ford: Moral Theologian at the End of the Manualist Era* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2007).

Stone provides a summary of the overall approach that most moral theologians take whenever they invoke the thought of a predecessor. He writes:

What should concern us here is the fact that Adrian is drawing upon different sources and traditions of arguments in order to construct a position that is very much his own. Never fully dependent on a single *auctoritas* or *secta*, he is first and foremost concerned to find practicable solutions to problematic cases in keeping with the voice of conscience and the requirements of the divine law. Although it might not be palatable to all philosophical tastes, Adrian's eclecticism liberates him from adopting a monolithic outlook on morality and facilitates his search for the most efficacious resolution to instances of moral doubt.

From Adrian he concludes that late Scholastic moralists "critically engaged with their own tradition of reflection" to "bring it to bear upon the perplexities of their day."¹⁹

A more recent authoritative voice is that of Indonesian theologian Dewi Maria Suharjanto, who has provided an in-depth study of German ethicist Franz Böckle. In the 1970s when European moralists were debating between an autonomous ethics and an ethics of faith, a debate differentiated largely by ideological concerns, Böckle talked about a "theonomic autonomy." Later, those in autonomous ethics would see in this proposal an autonomous ethics in the context of faith. Böckle wanted to write out of faith, but he hardly had sectarian instincts. He was always interested in the "whole" ("Das Ganze im Blicke"). He was as interested in rights and law as he was in norms, goods, and values. He could write about sinfulness but also criminality. He had this full interest so that he could speak completely about the "*humanum*." Like those mentioned above, Suharjanto captures the complexity of an authoritative voice without reducing his method to an easy program; instead he highlights the tensions and fundamental beliefs of a theological ethicist whose vision was often broader and deeper than previously understood.²⁰ Not surprisingly, then, Suharjanto's mentor, the German Karl-Wilhelm Merks has recently touched on some of these same themes, trying to mediate the claims of reason to those of faith.²¹

We can see, then, that theological ethicists are interested in discussing tradition not as enduring teachings but rather as authoritative voices.

¹⁹ Martin Stone, "Adrian of Utrecht and the University of Louvain: Theology and the Discussion of Moral Problems in the Late Fifteenth Century," *Traditio* 61 (2006) 247–87, at 286–87.

²⁰ Dewi Maria Suharjanto, *Die Probe auf das Humane: Zum theologische Profil der Ethik Franz Böckles* (Bonn: Bonn University, 2005).

²¹ Karl-Wilhelm Merks, "Wieviel Glauben hat die Moral nötig? Überlegungen zu Ansatz-Möglichkeiten interkultureller Ethik," in *Ecumenics from the Rim: Explorations in Honour of John D'Arcy May*, ed. John F. O'Grady and Peter Schüttke-Scherle (Münster: LIT, 2007) 261–70; Merks, "Morale et religion: Pistes de recherche," *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale* 248 (2008) 23–57.

This understanding of tradition is not new; the moralists of both high Scholasticism and high casuistry each engaged the specific individual authoritative voices of earlier eras. Tradition, then, was not always primarily thought of as a “*quod*,” as what the church hands over from one generation to another; sometimes the tradition is actually a “*quo*,” a voice or a community of voices that illuminates how the church tries to understand the signs of the times in light of the living gospel. As any student of Thomas Aquinas recognizes, his engagement of the tradition was precisely through authoritative voices: when these are understood, we better appreciate the humanity of the conversation as well as its breadth, depth, and scope.

Studying these voices, then, requires a particular sensitivity. In an important work for understanding the voice of Aquinas, Mark Jordan issues a powerful admonition on “reading Thomas Aquinas without encountering some other of his readers—especially the police.” The experience of reading Aquinas, of being educated by his theological inquiry, is a process that ought to resist the temptation to reduce Aquinas to a particular question from the *Summa*. We can only engage Aquinas in his own exploratory, yet deeply conversational, method. Aquinas invariably engages us as he does the multiple authorities, and the question for us is not whether we get Aquinas right as much as whether we get our own theology right in light of our reading Aquinas. Jordan concludes: “The pieces of Thomas’ *Summa* reconstitute themselves not so much by making a ‘more accurate’ picture of Aquinas as by influencing the practice of theology. What survives of the *Summa*’s structure, when it is read seriously, is a challenge to the theological writing of those who read it.”²²

VIRTUE ETHICS

At the beginning of his first book, *The Foundations of Moral Selfhood*, Andrew Dell’Olio posits that contemporary ethical theory is undergoing “a virtuous turn.”²³ He argues that it is almost impossible to think of the progress of morals without thinking of the turn to virtue ethics.²⁴ But that turn is a very traditional one.²⁵

²² Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas after His Readers* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006) 1, 185. See also Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (New York: Cambridge University, 2002).

²³ Andrew J. Dell’Olio, *The Foundations of Moral Selfhood: Aquinas on Divine Goodness and the Connection of the Virtues* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003) 1.

²⁴ See, for instance, M. Daniel Carroll and Jacqueline Lapsley, eds., *Character Ethics and the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); Robert L. Brawley, ed., *Character Ethics and the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

²⁵ M. Cathleen Kaveny brings virtue into the concrete order in “Virtuous Decision Makers and Incompetent Patients,” in *A Just and True Love* 338–65. See also

Recently, William Werpehowski expounded on the virtue of practical wisdom or prudence in the context of a very real world where the Christian is both sinner and righteous and needs not only counsel and judgment to discern moral courses of action but also the ongoing practices of repentance, renewal, and perseverance.²⁶ Throughout, Werpehowski leans on traditional figures, from Aquinas to Karl Barth, highlighting therein the forces that shaped our contemporary understanding of practical wisdom.

William McDonough takes up a challenge from Jean Porter on understanding better the relationship of the infused virtues to the moral life and, in responding, turns to an authoritative contemporary voice, German theological ethicist Eberhard Schockenhoff, to read Aquinas. The move is a remarkably good one. Much still needs to be said about the specific nature of the Christian moral life, in particular about the concrete way that faith, hope, and charity form our moral living, thinking, intending, and acting; McDonough gives us a fine start.

I too have been very interested in the specificity of Christian ethics and found in McDonough and Schockenhoff, as well as in Michael Sherwin, much that is true about the Thomist relationship between the theological and cardinal virtues for Christians.²⁷ Though the debate in the 1970s and 1980s on the *proprium* of moral theology had its own effect, I think theological ethicists, both older and younger, are finding in the virtues an avenue to grace, religious and communal identity, and a better integration with central religious beliefs in Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and the kingdom of God, while at the same time affording interreligious and cross-cultural dialogue.²⁸ Of all writers, however, Ireland's Enda McDonagh is incomparable in using virtue language to capture the specificity of moral theology.²⁹

Annemie Dillen, "Vers des familles justes: La famille en tant que communauté éthique," in *Les communautés chrétiennes* 115–25.

²⁶ William Werpehowski, "Practical Wisdom and the Integrity of Christian Life," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 55–72.

²⁷ William McDonough, "*Caritas* as the *Prae-Ambulum* of all Virtue: Eberhard Schockenhoff on the Theological-Anthropological Significance and the Contemporary Interreligious Relevance of Thomas Aquinas's Teaching on the *Virtutes Morales Infusae*," in *ibid.* 97–126; Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Bonum Hominis: Die anthropologischen und theologischen Grundlagen der Tugendethik bei Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1987); Schockenhoff, *Natural Law and Human Dignity* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2003); Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2005).

²⁸ Lúcas Chan Yiu Sing and James F. Keenan, "Bridging Christian Ethics and Confucianism through Virtue Ethics," *Chinese Cross Currents* 5.3 (2008) 74–85; Bernard Hoose, "The Way Beyond Civilization," in *Moral Theology for the Twenty-First Century* 13–19.

²⁹ See Enda McDonagh, "The Good News in Moral Theology: Of Hospitality, Healing, and Hope," in *ibid.* 80–86; and McDonagh, "The Reign of God: Signposts

Other works on virtue include one by Elizabeth Agnew Cochran who writes on Jonathan Edwards's treatment of the virtue in a christological context. Since Edwards saw virtues as divine perfections, Cochran turns to the virtue that specifically cannot be a perfection of God, but rather an excellence attributable to God's creatures. Still, in Christ, in particular in his self-renunciation, we find his humility, which illustrates what virtuous discipleship requires.³⁰ Through Edwards, Cochran sees humility as truly foundational to salvation and to our own redemption.

As she tries to articulate a new asceticism that emerges from the intimacy between liturgy and ethics, Margaret Pfeil offers us an "ecological humility" that could occasion "the process of reeducating human desires." To make her case, she combs the tradition for authoritative voices—Maximus the Confessor, Benedict of Norcia, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Merton, and Teilhard de Chardin—to bring forward a virtue that has an immediate urgency resulting from oft unexamined contemporary challenges.³¹

Elsewhere, Lisa Fullam has a new book studying Aquinas's use of humility and its relationship to magnanimity. Fullam argues well that humility is a "first virtue," the virtue that makes true virtue possible. After defining Aquinas's contribution, she turns to three key insights that dominate the tradition about which Aquinas provides a summary. From Benedict and the desert ascetics she defines humility as true self-understanding; from Augustine she retrieves humility as the self-knowledge of a sinner; and from other sources she sees humility as a practice of "other-centeredness." In a riveting closing chapter she argues that humility has a deeply epistemological function, in empowering us to discover ourselves, our communities, and the world. In a word, humility is the possibility of wisdom.³²

A variety of works turn to traditional voices and specific virtues so as to apply them to contemporary issues. Craig Stevens Titus places Aquinas in dialogue with the psychological sciences. At the heart of his work is the renewal of moral theology through the virtues, and here he critically engages Aquinas on fortitude in light of contemporary theories on resiliency. Therein he explores the virtues of initiative-taking, like

for Catholic Moral Theology," *Immersed in Mystery: En Route to Theology* (Dublin: Veritas, 2007) 116–22.

³⁰ Elizabeth Agnew Cochran, "Creaturely Virtues in Jonathan Edwards: The Significance of Christology for the Moral Life," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 73–96.

³¹ Margaret Pfeil, "Liturgy and Ethics: The Liturgical Aestheticism of Energy Conservation," *ibid.* 127–49.

³² Lisa Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility: A Reconstruction Based on Thomas Aquinas*, (New York: Mellen, 2008).

magnanimity and magnificence, and those of resisting, like patience and perseverance.³³

German ethicist Herbert Schlögel looks to the historical tradition of sin and confession to give us a contemporary understanding of the virtue and practice of reconciliation. Along the way he encourages us to see that sin is both personal and social; that sin emanates from weakness and from power; and that the deeply spiritual practice of reconciliation must have clear, concrete, social effect.³⁴

David Pratt studies the just war tradition and in particular the problematic conclusions that a principle of double effect achieves. He insists that the original context for the just war, that is, the virtue of charity, ought to be reclaimed. Specifically, he turns to benevolence, a virtue that straddles Christian charity and justice.³⁵

Alain Thomasset uses the virtues for an effective understanding of the Scriptures. Turning to the writings of the late William Spohn, Thomasset seeks to transform the emotions of the Scripture reader and to use the virtues as lenses for forming the personal and communal identities of the faithful. Rightly he recognizes that to read Scripture is a gift that shapes us into the people who are able to do what Jesus does. By letting ourselves be shaped by the gospel, we allow the work of revelation to affectively form us for the work of the kingdom.³⁶

Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah brings a critical realism to virtue ethics so as to realize the vision “of what it is for a human life to go well.” Like others, Appiah turns to the necessity of tradition. “It is my argument that we should be free to avail ourselves of the resources of many disciplines to define that vision; and that in bringing them together we are being faithful to a long tradition. In the humanities, I think, we are always engaged in illuminating the present by drawing on the past; it is the only way to make a future worth hoping for.”³⁷

Appiah is concerned about a virtue ethics that looks like a conceptual program of moral development rather than an actual incentive to be well and act well. He looks to the concrete to ask the Aristotelian question, how

³³ Craig Steven Titus, *Resilience and the Virtue of Fortitude: Aquinas in Dialogue with the Psychological Sciences* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 2006).

³⁴ Herbert Schlögel, *Und vergib uns meine Schuld, Wie auch wir . . . : Theologisch-ethische Skizzen zur Versöhnung und Sünde*, Feiern mit der Bibel 25 (Stuttgart: Bibelwerk, 2007).

³⁵ David Pratt, “From Just War Fictions to Virtues of Benevolence Renovating the Just War Theory,” *Louvain Studies* 31 (2006) 276–305.

³⁶ Alain Thomasset, “Personnages bibliques et ‘formation’ éthique des lecteurs,” *Analyse narrative et Bible*, ed. Camille Focant and André Wénin (Leuven: University, 2005) 73–94.

³⁷ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Experiment in Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 2008) 1–2.

does one act in the unanticipated situation? He warns against an internal person-based ethics that is not very interested in human action. He also admonishes us to avoid an unhelpful idealism when talking about growth in virtue but wants us to see how the social world in which we live helps us to grow. Toward this end, he looks less to moral education programs and more to social institutions that help human beings live and act better, if not well.

Finally, William Mattison provides an introductory textbook for moral theology exclusively in the key of happiness and virtue. A very Thomistic framework, it covers the cardinal and theological virtues. A new scholar, Mattison introduces the reader to the material through a fairly hospitable narrative of how he learned the virtues from his teachers, that is, from voices authoritative to him. The student here becomes the teacher. But Mattison insists on sharing the meaningfulness of faith and morals for his life, and the result is a text with a fine confessional tone that is engaging and welcoming.³⁸

RESPONSIBILITY ETHICS AND NARRATIVE ETHICS

This year Leuven University celebrated the retirement of Belgium's Roger Burggraeve and his work on Emanuel Levinas.³⁹ In the former's responsibility ethics, we find a philosophical and theological anthropology that is congruent with the efforts of virtue ethics. For instance, Burggraeve always looks at persons before actions and offers an ethics of growth, highlighting how a relational, moral development shapes and affects moral objectivity.⁴⁰ Seeing the possibility of bridging virtue and responsibility ethics, Stephen Pope applies the former by using the Thomistic virtue of friendship to tease out the deeply relational responsibility ethics of Burggraeve.⁴¹ But Burggraeve himself turns to virtues to develop his responsibility ethics. Reflecting on the soul and extent of our responsibility, he offers a new ordering to the Enlightenment's classic summons: fraternity, equality, and freedom. Quite deliberately, fraternity becomes the conditioned foundation for equality and freedom. Without it, the

³⁸ William C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2008). For a more general introduction see Joseph Zalot and Benedict Guevin, *Catholic Ethics in Today's World* (Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary's, 2008).

³⁹ Johan de Tavenier et al., eds., *Responsibility, God, and Society: Festschrift Roger Burggraeve* (Dudley, Mass.: Peeters, 2008).

⁴⁰ James F. Keenan, "Roger Burggraeve's Ethics of Growth in Context," in *ibid.* 287–304.

⁴¹ Stephen Pope, "Our Brother's Keeper: Thomistic Friendship and Roger Burggraeve's Ethics of Responsibility," in *ibid.* 331–56. Joseph Selling captures the challenge of the collection and gives a critical, if hesitant, nod toward virtue ethics: "The Structure and Context of Ethical Discourse," in *ibid.* 371–87.

other two are possible. Additionally, he argues that fraternity is not the biological inclination to one's own, but rather the radical ethical choice for universal solidarity with specific attention to the other as foreigner.⁴²

In the same collection, Paul Schotsmans turns to the virtue of solidarity as he develops an ethics of scarce resource allocation.⁴³ That solidarity squares well with Levinas's other-centeredness or his actual trademark, "alterity."⁴⁴ Still, rather than turning to virtue, Veerle Draulans offers an ethics of care as compatible with a Levinas responsibility ethics,⁴⁵ and Annemie Dillen looks to a realistic responsibility ethics for family life.⁴⁶

Elsewhere, Argentinian theological ethicist Aldo Marcelo Cáceres builds on a spirituality of gift to propose a responsibility ethics for globalization. His argument depends on the contributions of a variety of senior theologians, like Marciano Vidal, Leonardo Boff, and Hans Küng, as well as two other noteworthy commentators, Adela Cortina and John Paul II, all of whom point us toward responsibility for our globalized world. But in Küng he finds a communality in religious traditions: humanity. The interests that religious traditions bring to an ethics of globalization is an essential awareness of our humanity, and that communality in turn promotes a solidarity across national frontiers.⁴⁷

Just as the turn to traditional voices in virtue and in responsibility ethics leads us to move beyond the framework of particular traditions, the same occurs in narrative ethics. On this topic, Alexander Lucie-Smith has written an intelligent, scholarly argument, incorporating narrative theology into a more Catholic context. In a world in which cross-cultural dialogue and ethics is all the more important, he aims to keep narratives from being trapped in their own local traditions.⁴⁸

Writing from Nairobi, Lucie-Smith examines Alasdair MacIntyre's masterful *After Virtue*, which contends that normative or abstract thought derives from or is constitutive of a narrative history. A norm without its

⁴² Roger Burggraeve, "Fraternity, Equality, Freedom: On the Soul and Extent of Freedom," in *ibid.* 1–22.

⁴³ Paul Schotsmans, "Responsibility in Solidarity: Equal Care as the Best of Care," in *ibid.* 357–70.

⁴⁴ Of the several essays that explore "alterity," especially noteworthy is Australian Glenn Morrison's "The (Im)possibilities of Levinas for Christian Theology: The Search for a Language of Alterity," in *ibid.* 103–22.

⁴⁵ Veerle Draulans, "Care: Making Values Traditionally Associated with Feminism Visible," in *ibid.* 257–86.

⁴⁶ Annemie Dillen, "Responsibility in the Family: The Complementarity of Ethics of Children and Marriage," in *ibid.* 233–56.

⁴⁷ Aldo Marcelo Cáceres, *Una ética para la globalización* (Buenos Aires: San Augustin, 2005).

⁴⁸ Alexander Lucie-Smith, *Narrative Theology and Moral Theology: The Infinite Horizon* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007).

narrative lacks its history and its intelligibility. Lucie-Smith then turns to Hauerwas as the theological expositor of narrative theology but flags a criticism from James Gustafson, warning that, unless narrative theology has some intrinsic inclination to go beyond the boundaries of its own tradition, it will inevitably slide into sectarianism.⁴⁹

Heeding Gustafson, Lucie-Smith turns to John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* to argue that a particular tradition could leave itself open to a more universal horizon. To illustrate this move, Lucie-Smith proposes that Augustine was doing narrative theology from the beginning, whether of the self in his *Confessions* or of the church in *The City of God*. Augustine used narrative precisely to bridge the local or the particular to the universal. With Augustine as his theological foundation, Lucie-Smith leads us through the rest of his work, from learning how to enter narrative to developing an appreciation of the place of narrative in moral theology.

In a fulsome argument, Wm. Carter Aikin introduces two modes of doing narrative ethics. He first registers concern that, when narrative theology becomes narrative theological ethics, the nature of the narrative becomes less of an encounter and more of a lens. The narrative becomes an idol. But Aiken looks at some of the major commentators on hermeneutics and appropriates from Jean-Luc Marion the difference between narrative icon and linguistic idol. "For the narrative icon, the transformative power of the gaze upon the visible narrative exists only because the gaze rebounds off this transparent visible to the invisible God, where our gaze is returned." He adds, "the text, as visible, redounds our gaze to the invisible." "The primary encounter is between my gaze and God's self-revelation through Jesus Christ—not the static revelation of a singular narrative with its visible meaning but instead the dynamic Word of God to me in this moment through the narrative of scripture."⁵⁰ If a traditional turn is more toward a person than a thing, then the turn to the icon rather than the idol is the ultimate traditional move.

Finally, if virtue let Mattison give us an introductory text to moral theology, traditional narratives lets Nigeria's Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator explore some central issues of contemporary faith: from the (non) naming of God to the Trinity, from Christology to mercy and grace, and from the kingdom to the communion of saints. This master-storyteller draws his

⁴⁹ For a newly edited collection of Gustafson's works, see his *Moral Discernment in the Christian Life: Essays in Theological Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

⁵⁰ Wm. Carter Aiken, "Narrative Icon and Linguistic Idol: Reexamining the Narrative Turn in Theological Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 28 (2008) 87–109, at 97.

material from the traditional stories of his fellow Nigerian Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.⁵¹

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND ETHICS

In the turn to history, nothing is more important for moral theology than looking to understand the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In a new volume of *Concilium* entitled *Jesus as Christ*, the contributors insist on how indispensable the Jesus of history is for our faith. Lisa Sowle Cahill develops criteria for constructing theologies of the cross and quotes the Filipina Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, who argues that theories of Christ should never permit us to “veer away from the ethics of accountability. . . . Christ talk is Christology half-done. It has to be practiced. Jesus has shown us how.”⁵² While both Roger Haight and Felix Wilfrid discuss the possibility of the legitimacy of multiple Christologies, other writers focus more exclusively on the historical Jesus.⁵³ Andrés Torres Queiruga notes not only *that* Jesus is human but *how*. “Examining this humanity . . . is the basic task of Christology.”⁵⁴ Sean Freyne focuses on how often we try to escape the Jesus of history: he raises a key question of Jesus’ Jewishness and how often Jesus is depicted not as he was, a Jew, and how Christologies try to transcend his Jewishness.⁵⁵ Finally, Maria Bingemer looks at Jesus in order to address some polemical issues that keep us from understanding the oneness of humanity as masculine and feminine.⁵⁶

Behind these essays are the enduring theological insights and claims of Jon Sobrino whose entire theology depends on the historicity of Jesus. In the *Concilium* volume, he draws us to the kingdom of God so that we may understand how to “put God’s wish for his creation into practice.”⁵⁷ Sobrino sees the failure of Christologies to capture the historical death of Jesus on the cross as the fundamental oversight that in turn leads us to ignore the call of the kingdom and the need to respond to the option of the poor. Sobrino’s turn to the real traditional Jesus leads him then to pose to

⁵¹ A. E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008).

⁵² Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2006) 200, quoted in Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Salvation and the Cross,” in *Jesus as Christ: What Is at Stake in Christology? Concilium* 2008/3, ed. Andrés Torres Queiruga et al. (London: SCM, 2008/3.) 55–63, at 61–62.

⁵³ Roger Haight, “Scripture: A Pluralistic Norm for Understanding Our Salvation in Jesus Christ,” in *ibid.* 11–23; Felix Wilfred, “Christological Pluralism: Some Reflections,” in *ibid.* 84–95.

⁵⁴ Andrés Torres Queiruga, “Jesus: Genuinely Human,” in *ibid.* 33–43, at 38.

⁵⁵ Sean Freyne, “Jesus the Jew,” in *ibid.* 24–32.

⁵⁶ Maria Bingemer, “Masculinity, Fertility, and the Christ,” in *ibid.* 73–83.

⁵⁷ Jon Sobrino, “The Coming Kingdom or God’s Present Reign,” in *ibid.* 44–54, at 44.

us this question: how do we meet the one who calls us into the kingdom? “The Kingdom of God,” he writes, “in no way distances us from the God of the Kingdom. It can make him closer and even more ‘human.’ This is what was made present by Jesus’ course through this world.”⁵⁸

In a companion volume, Daniel Harrington turns specifically to the trial and death of the historical Jesus.⁵⁹ Lisa Cahill reviews the deep connection between a Christology and the kingdom and how the identity of Jesus shapes Christian politics.⁶⁰ Stephen Pope captures how an incarnational vision of Jesus does not let us abandon the “historical world to its wretchedness.”⁶¹

The ramifications of the turn to the historical Jesus is illustrated in Mark Allman’s eye-catching title, *Who Would Jesus Kill? War, Peace, and the Christian Tradition*. Allman considers a continuum of traditional stances from pacifism (seven types are explained) to just war (two interpretations, one based on a classic understanding of just cause, the other a contemporary, continually restrictive definition of such a cause) to holy war (with four conditions).⁶²

Elsewhere France’s Philippe Bordeyne looks to the historical Jesus to see how concretely a Christian eschatology shapes social responsibility. Turning to Jesus the Wiseman who brings in the kingdom, Bordeyne underlines how human solidarity occasions the conditions of hope even in the face of personal and collective fragility.⁶³

Finally George Newlands reviews the texts of terror in which Christologies were once instruments of oppression against large sectors of humanity. He then turns to a more humane (historical?) Christology to connect it with the universal discourse on human rights.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Ibid. 53.

⁵⁹ Daniel J. Harrington, “What Got Jesus Killed? Sobrino’s Historical-Theological Reading of Scripture,” in *Hope and Solidarity: Jon Sobrino’s Challenge to Christian Theology*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008) 79–89.

⁶⁰ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Christ and Kingdom: The Identity of Jesus and Christian Politics,” in *ibid.* 242–53; see also Roberto Goizueta, “The Christology of Jon Sobrino,” in *ibid.* 90–103.

⁶¹ Stephen J. Pope, “On Not Abandoning the Historical World to Its Wretchedness,” in *ibid.* 44–62; see also James F. Keenan, “Radicalizing the Comprehensiveness of Mercy: Christian Identity in Theological Ethics,” in *ibid.* 187–200.

⁶² Mark J. Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill? War, Peace, and the Christian Tradition* (Winona, Minn.: Saint Mary’s, 2008).

⁶³ Philippe Bordeyne, “Christian Eschatology as a Factor of Social Responsibility,” in *Responsibility, God, and Society* 185–212.

⁶⁴ George Newlands, *Christ and Human Rights: The Transformative Engagement* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2006).

GLOBALIZATION

In an interesting volume from France discussing the task of traditional communities in shaping members for a more mature and contemporary ethics, Philippe Bordeyne ponders the role of the tradition. He argues that mature Christians must appropriate from their tradition the specific insights that will allow them to develop a universal ethics and encourage them to transcend the very specific boundaries of their own tradition.⁶⁵

Similarly, Jean-Marie Donegani sees that tradition is no longer perceived as a system of ascendancy to which we belong but as sources of meaning we draw upon for our identity. Traditional communities of believers are therefore more elective, pluralist, and transitory. Traditions are no longer stable and monolithic (if they ever were), but rather communal, resourceful, liberating, and self-transcending.⁶⁶

From Australia, Robert Gascoigne turns to the sustained Catholic social justice tradition and argues that by its awareness of human suffering and its commitment to human rights, the Catholic Church can invoke and teach human solidarity concretely today. In the face of individual consumption in an economically globalized world, it can offer a vision of the human community that resists such individualistic lifestyles.⁶⁷

From the 2006 Padova Conference, Linda Hogan edits 30 essays in “applied ethics.” Throughout these essays is the recurring, underlying question: what does a turn to tradition bring to us? Two examples highlight the issue. From France, Bertrand Lebouché asks whether the tradition is an adversary or ally in AIDS treatment.⁶⁸ From Italy, Simone Morandini looks for the relationship between the tradition and sustainability.⁶⁹

Finally Stephen Pope’s *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics* serves as a perfect point of closure for this essay, because Pope shapes the future course of the natural law tradition for a globalized world. Regarding the tradition, typical natural law theory has almost always presumed a classical

⁶⁵ Philippe Bordeyne, “Communautés chrétiennes et formation des sujets: Les enjeux d’un discernement théologique,” *Les communautés chrétiennes* 11–30.

⁶⁶ Jean-Marie Donegani, “Identités contemporaines, traditions, communautés, sociétés: Entretien,” in *ibid.* 51–64.

⁶⁷ Robert Gascoigne, “Christian Identity and Social Commitment,” in *Ecumenics from the Rim* 71–78. See also Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., “Globalization with a Human Face: Catholic Social Teaching and Globalization,” *Theological Studies* 69 (2008) 269–89.

⁶⁸ Bertrand Lebouché, Jean-François Malherbe, Christian Trepo, and Raymond Lemieux, “Religion in the AIDS Crisis: Irrelevance, Adversary, or Ally? The Case of the Catholic Church,” in *Applied Ethics in a World Church: The Padua Conference*, ed. Linda Hogan (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008) 170–81.

⁶⁹ Simon Morandini, “Reflections on the Relationship between Ecology and Theological Ethics,” in *ibid.* 73–83.

teleology, and contemporary natural law theorists in the United States (like John Finnis and Germain Grisez) evidence complete disinterest in evolutionary theory. Still, Pope retrieves the entire tradition of the natural law, especially from Aquinas, to provide an apologia for evolutionary theory and, in so doing, lays a groundwork for future theologians. Second, regarding globalization, in anticipating the natural law's relevance to human dignity and human flourishing, he gives it a much more universal appeal. Though he signals the natural law contributions of Lisa Sowle Cahill, Pamela Hall, and Jean Porter as significantly resonant with the best of contemporary scientific theory, I would add that he would find equally strong interlocutors with Antonio Autiero, Carlo Casalone, Klaus Demmer, Marciano Vidal, and other European theological ethicists who have for the past 20 years been developing a deep and abiding interest in the hermeneutical compatibility of reason, tradition, and the evolutionary nature of creation.⁷⁰

The turn to tradition is, then, a human turn that enables us to capture insights from our forerunners so as to consider the contemporary world and to make possible our engagement with others beyond the framework in which we live. Precisely as we take what we need from it, we discover our tradition as a living one.

⁷⁰ Stephen J. Pope, *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University, 2007).