

PROPOSING CARDINAL VIRTUES

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RECENT WORK in virtue ethics, particularly sustained reflection on specific virtues, makes it possible to argue that the classical list of cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude) is inadequate, and that we need to articulate the cardinal virtues more correctly. With that end in view, the first section of this article describes the challenges of espousing cardinal virtues today, the second considers the inadequacy of the classical listing of cardinal virtues, and the third makes a proposal. Since virtues, no matter how general, should always relate to concrete living, the article is framed by a case.

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Fifteen years ago, while preparing for priestly studies, I took my first exam in moral theology. The question was simple: resolve the case of Mrs. Bergmeier. Like all good cases, Mrs. Bergmeier's has undergone several incarnations;¹ thus some may be surprised to find her in a Nazi camp as opposed to a Soviet Gulag. In any event, the case that I was given was the following: Mrs. Bergmeier is a married woman with several children and a husband who is ill. She has been arrested by the Nazis for assisting her Jewish neighbors and sentenced to six years without parole. After months in the camp, she learns that her husband's health is progressively declining due to his tending to the children, and that the children are not faring at all well due to their father's ailing state. She also learns something else: because of overcrowding, the camp releases pregnant women who are held for lesser crimes, like hers. Aware of one particular guard who regularly makes outrageous advances on her, Mrs. Bergmeier, for the sake of her family, submits herself to him. Three months later a pregnant Mrs. Bergmeier returns to her family to care for her husband and children.

When I took the exam, Catholic moral theologians responding to the case were grouped into two camps. The first simply reiterated a position held for several centuries that any act of sexual relations outside of marriage is always intrinsically wrong. These called themselves deontologists. For them the case was simple: Mrs. Bergmeier's action was wrong. The second group found the case difficult; but, rather than challenge the first group, they debated among themselves. They were called proportionalists or revisionists. They raised two types of con-

¹ See the case debated over years in Richard McCormick, *Notes on Moral Theology: 1965 through 1980* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981) 356-57, 512, 536, 753-54.

cerns. The first type asked what the object of Mrs. Bergmeier's activity was. Was her action an extension of her marriage, or a contradiction of it? That is, did her activity compromise the institution of marriage? The second type concerned its effects—on the guard, the husband, the children, and the new child. Acknowledging the guard's own evident wickedness, did she further compromise the reprobate by engaging him in illicit activity? Did she betray her husband? How would her children understand this new child? What would life be like for this child born under such tragic circumstances?

Despite these considerations, nowhere did anyone ask how this action affected Mrs. Bergmeier. Instead, the entire case concerned how her action affected others. Reflection on this omission leads to the question: What should be at the center of any discussion involving the famous case of Mrs. Bergmeier? Should the acts of intercourse and the effects of those acts be at the center of ethical discussion, as they were for the deontologists and the proportionalists?² Or should Mrs. Bergmeier be at the center? Placing the moral agent and not moral action or its consequences at the center of moral reflection distinguishes a third school of moral reasoning called virtue ethics.

Long before William Bennett, theologians and philosophers were seeking a new method of ethics that would be agent based. In 1973, with its premiere issue, the *Journal of Religious Ethics* published a debate between those advocating an act-based ethics and those advocating a person-based or virtue ethics.³ In 1981 Alasdair MacIntyre published *After Virtue*, probably the most influential book to date on the topic.⁴ Since that time, what was once a select interest has become a very productive enterprise. Thus we find in 1987 an already outdated 36-page "selected bibliography" of philosophical essays on virtue.⁵ And in more recent years, a number of extensive review essays have made their appearance, in the *American Philosophical Quarterly*,⁶ the

² Some might reject the suggestion that proportionalists are fundamentally act-oriented ethicists and not agent-oriented. But proportionalists like Janssens, McCormick, and Schüller have always written about the pre-moral or ontic values of acts and have not invoked the anthropological standards of the virtues. See *Readings in Moral Theology No. 1: Moral Norms and Catholic Tradition*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist, 1979).

³ See Frederick Carney, "The Virtue-Obligation Controversy," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 1 (1973) 5–19; William Frankena, "The Ethics of Love Conceived as an Ethics of Virtue," *ibid.* 21–31. Carney, "On Frankena and Religious Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 3 (1975) 7–26; Frankena, "Conversations with Carney and Hauerwas," *ibid.* 45–62; Stanley Hauerwas, "Obligation and Virtue Once More," *ibid.* 27–44.

⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981).

⁵ *The Virtues: Contemporary Skills on Moral Character*, ed. Robert Kruschwitz and Robert Roberts (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1987) 237–62.

⁶ Gregory Trianosky, "What is Virtue Ethics All About?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1990) 335–44; also Gregory Pence, "Recent Work on Virtues," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (1984) 281–97.

Religious Studies Review,⁷ as well as in this journal.⁸

Certainly, some like William Frankena and Bruno Schüller find that virtue ethics cannot be an independent method of moral reasoning. For them, virtues merely augment an existing method; they do not supply specific directives for determining right or wrong conduct.⁹ Frankena and Schüller claim that principles and rules direct, while virtues merely enable us to perform what the principles command. Thus virtues are auxiliary and derivative, recommended as the appropriate exercises necessary to accomplish the end to which specific principles and rules direct us. But Martha Nussbaum argues that the Greeks used virtues precisely to judge moral conduct: virtues can provide the standards of morally right conduct. Virtues, not principles, are the source for understanding normative conduct. In fact, principles and rules are derived from virtues: they are directives that obtain their content from the virtuous activity which humanity enjoins.¹⁰ As opposed to the auxiliary use that they are assigned by others, in this schema the virtues are adequate life-guides.

In order to understand virtue ethics as life-guides, we can turn to MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, where he proposed that the issue of morality is a three-fold question: Who am I? Who ought I to become? How ought I to get there? The answer to each question refers to the virtues. Applying the list of classical cardinal virtues, then, the first question is not simply "Who am I?" but "Am I just, temperate, brave and prudent?" The second question reflects on the first, and in asking, "Who do I need to become?" it presumably answers, "more just, temperate, brave, and prudent." The third question asks, "In which virtuous practices ought I to engage in order to attain that goal?" Paul Waddell sums up the answer to the threefold question in this way: "The project of the moral life is to become a certain kind of person."¹¹ That person is a virtuous one.

The task of virtue is defined, therefore, as the acquisition and development of practices that perfect the agent into becoming a moral person while acting morally well. Through these practices or virtues, one's character and one's actions are enhanced. Now the issue that

⁷ Lee Yearley, "Recent Work on Virtue," *Religious Studies Review* 16 (1990) 1-9.

⁸ William Spohn, "The Return of Virtue Ethics," *TS* 53 (1992) 60-75.

⁹ William Frankena, "Conversations with Carney and Hauerwas"; "The Ethics of Love Conceived of as an Ethics of Virtue"; Bruno Schüller, *Die Begründung sittlicher Urteile* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1980).

¹⁰ Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University, 1986) 299; "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13, *Ethical Theory: Character and Virtue* ed. P. French, T. Uehling, and H. Wettstein (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988) 32-53. Likewise, see John Kekes, *The Examined Life* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1988).

¹¹ Paul Waddell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989) 136.

emerges is: Precisely what are the virtues that make one a "moral person"?

The answer is extraordinarily complicated, especially for two reasons. The first concerns the claims of culture. MacIntyre warns that it belongs historically to local communities to determine the practices that shape the excellent person.¹² He notes that Homeric culture, for instance, held the warrior as the prototypically excellent person and therefore emphasized the virtue of bravery, while Aristotle presumed the Athenian gentleman as the excellent person and promoted the virtue of prudence. Likewise, in our own country the excellent person in 17th-century pioneering America was considerably different from the one in late 20th-century urban America.

MacIntyre's claim concerns differences not only in history, but also in geography. Consider the evident differences in the excellent person among the people of Zaire, Malaysia, France, or Brazil. Likewise, persons from New York, Biloxi, Miami, Kansas City, and Beverly Hills cannot easily propose their own ideal to others. Even within American Roman Catholic culture(s), there are no shared presuppositions about the ideal of the excellent person.¹³

Besides the claims of culture, the uniqueness of the individual makes its own claim. Owen Flanagan argues that any attempt to articulate a single anthropological portrait normative for moral conduct is pointless, because such a normative portrait would be a fiction. A realistic psychology teaches that the possibilities for moral excellence are as unlimited as the individual is complex and as human experience is itself original.¹⁴

A discussion of great saints and heroes helps illustrate that no single portrait of a moral saint or hero has ever provided a definitive expression of what a human person ought to be. Saint Elizabeth was not Mahatma Gandhi; St. John the Baptizer was not the Little Flower. Upholding the uniqueness of these morally excellent individuals, Flanagan takes an iconoclastic swing at any attempt to make these figures role models: their singularity prevents their being paradigms.¹⁵ The Christian community supports this insight. The commu-

¹² A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; see also his *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1988).

¹³ Anne Patrick reflects on how different Roman Catholic communities elevate a variety of icons of holiness: a young virgin like Maria Goretti who dies fighting off a rapist is not a Dorothy Day ("Narrative and the Social Dynamics of Virtue," *Changing Values and Virtues*, ed. Dietmar Mieth and Jacques Pohier [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987] 69–80).

¹⁴ O. Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1991).

¹⁵ Caroline Walker Bynum warns us against considering a saint as a model of virtue: "Medieval hagiographers pointed out repeatedly that saints are not even primarily 'models' for ordinary mortals; the saints are far too dangerous for that" (*Holy Feast and Holy Fast* [Berkeley: University of California, 1987] 7).

nion of the saints demonstrates the enormous variety of ways that the holy is incarnated; it demonstrates, as Flanagan beautifully puts it, "the deep truth that persons find their good in many different ways."¹⁶

In particular, Flanagan attacks the moral-developmental model of Lawrence Kohlberg.¹⁷ Kohlberg proposed that the morally right thinker must go through a series of six stages of growth to reach the final stage of moral development, which is to understand and articulate the universal claims of justice. The thinker at this final stage is Kohlberg's idea of the morally excellent person, an idea that is very influential today in our school systems. Flanagan complains that Kohlberg's six stages of moral development are reductive and demand an unreasonable conformity; in effect, people do not come out of Kohlberg's system as right thinkers but as Kohlberg clones. Kohlberg's theory suppresses the fact that "the heterogeneity of the moral is a deep and significant fact."¹⁸

Like MacIntyre's cultural claims, Flanagan's anthropological arguments are refreshing and important. He insists that people can only become morally excellent persons by being themselves. The saint has always been an original, never an imitation.

This insight strikes at the current American preoccupation to understand ourselves through prefabricated categories and to be able to predict behavior based on that understanding. For this end, we submit ourselves to tests that give us a code of letters or numbers. In particular, our religious communities form their members by inviting them to be tested and subsequently labelled. If we do Myers-Briggs, we walk around asking, "Are you a J, an E, or a P?" If we do enneagrams, we ask, "Are you a 1 or an 8?" These methods are fundamentally reductive and frustrate the self-understanding they propose to offer. Flanagan reminds us that when we settle for describing ourselves by such categories, we surrender the uniqueness of our identities.

So if we want to pursue the naming of cardinal virtues, we need to take the claims of culture and the uniqueness of individuals into account. First of all, Flanagan's concerns are not really about naming the cardinal virtues, but rather about whether we ought to preconceive a definitively excellent person, that is, a unique incarnation of the virtues. Our task is not to describe an ideal expression of the excellent person. We need simply to identify the minimal conditions that must be met to call any person virtuous.

Second, in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre contends that specific cultures shape through their practices the answers to the questions that his title raises. Despite his argument, he seems to pre-

¹⁶ Flanagan, *Varieties* 158.

¹⁷ L. Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

¹⁸ Flanagan, *Varieties* 195.

sume that the virtues of justice and prudence exist universally and prior to any culture's particular determination of them. What we are investigating, then, is the possibility of naming certain minimal though universal expressions of virtue that are subsequently given content in diverse cultures. Our modest pursuit is not the very specific, culturally articulated morally excellent person, but rather the basic qualities of the minimally virtuous one.

Nussbaum, instead of beginning with the priority of distinctive cultures, recognizes that humans enjoy common spheres of experience and that each sphere is perfected by virtue. She lists from Aristotle eleven spheres and adds that they are so essential to human living, that "no matter where one lives one cannot escape these questions, so long as one is living a human life."¹⁹ Nussbaum advocates an ethics based on an understanding of the human that crosses cultural boundaries and precedes the actual moral perfecting and informing of those eleven areas. Thus she finds some common ground to discuss with other cultures how they proceed to instruct their members about living and acting well in those spheres.

The proposal here is similar. Rather than being definitive expressions of character, the cardinal virtues perform a heuristic function to answer broadly the three questions of MacIntyre. These three questions are extraordinarily general; they do not fill in the claims of either culture or the individual.

Thus we pursue the cardinal virtues because they express what minimally constitutes a virtuous person. Philosophers and theologians have recognized that being virtuous is more than having a particular habit of acting, e.g. generosity. Rather, it means having a fundamental set of related virtues that enable a person to live and act morally well. The cardinal virtues have the task of making a person sufficiently rightly ordered to perform morally right action. Beyond the cardinal virtues, other virtues are certainly important, but the cardinal virtues perfect the fundamental anthropological dimensions of being human that are needed for integrated virtuous behavior. Thus Thomas Aquinas describes the four virtues as principles of integration both in the person²⁰ and in the action itself.²¹

The cardinal virtues are based on modest claims. They do not purport to offer a picture of the ideal person nor to exhaust the entire domain of virtue. Rather than being the last word on virtue, they are among the first, providing the bare essentials for right human living and specific action. Thus, as the word cardinal derives from the word hinge, the cardinal virtues provide a skeleton both of what human persons should basically be and at what human action should basically aim. All other issues of virtue hang on the skeletal structures of both rightly integrated dispositions and right moral action.

¹⁹ Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues" 36.

²⁰ *Summa theologiae* 1-2, q. 61, a. 2. ²¹ *Ibid.* a. 3.

This article makes an even more modest claim. Admittedly the days are gone (did they ever exist?) when a member of one culture could articulate the actual content and the actual application of specific virtues universally. Even more problematic is a definitive transcultural depiction of the four cardinal virtues. These admissions made, is it not legitimate to propose a highly formal description of the virtuous person for the sake of discussing transculturally and transgenerationally our understanding of right human living? Could we not make the description of the cardinal virtues formal enough so that each culture could fill each virtue with its specific material content and apply it practically? If we cannot, that is, if we believe that something even this formal is untenable, then we will have to acknowledge that cultural boundaries are absolute. That would contradict one of the functions of virtue: to provide understanding, not only about the practices that specific cultures recommend, but also about the humanity we share. Toward this end, the cardinal virtues that I propose—prudence, justice, fidelity, and self-care—will be thinly described. There is no flesh on this skeleton. But they actually provide us with a way of talking across cultures.

To appreciate the importance of this project, by way of example, it is reasonable to assume that every society has a concept for what ought to be the internal disposition for waiting, and for the proper exterior way of acting as one waits. Every culture recommends what many cultures call “patience,” but each articulates and applies the virtue in a very different way. Nonetheless, “patience” itself becomes a reference point by which members from one culture can discuss with another the ways that persons learn to perceive, understand, and acquire the right stance for waiting. Similarly, we read cross-cultural studies of particular virtues like courage and honor.²² These studies prompt an attempt to propose cardinal virtues, precisely to see whether we can exchange with one another across time and place what it means to be and to act in a minimally integrated virtuous way.

INADEQUACY OF THE CLASSICAL CARDINAL VIRTUES

Before scrutinizing the classical cardinal virtues, we need to set two basic parameters. First, though philosophers distinguish between a good act and a right act, arguing that the former conforms to virtue and the latter to rules, theologians distinguish goodness from rightness in a completely different way. They argue that goodness pertains to charity, and rightness describes an action or a way of living that conforms to the criteria of the method which they advance. Thus a deontologist calls people good if they have charity, but calls conduct

²² Lee Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990); Frank Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994).

right if it is neither intrinsically wrong nor disproportionate. Likewise, a proportionalist calls people good if they have charity, but calls conduct right if it has proportionate reason. Finally, a virtue ethicist also calls people good who have charity, but conduct right if it conforms to the virtues. Charity aside, the virtues are about our being rightly ordered in essential areas of life.²³ The virtues are about right actions coming from rightly ordered or virtuous persons.²⁴

Contemporary Catholic moral theologians like Klaus Demmer,²⁵ Josef Fuchs,²⁶ Louis Janssens,²⁷ Richard McCormick,²⁸ and Schüller²⁹ advance the distinction and add that in order to call a person good the person's conduct does not need to be right; striving out of love for the right sufficiently describes a good person.³⁰ This is the response to the gift of charity: to strive for right living.³¹ Thus these authors do not separate goodness and rightness: as goodness pursues the right, true charity pursues the cardinal virtues.

Second, the four cardinal virtues do not necessarily engage one's

²³ Besides Nussbaum, see John Kekes, *The Examined Life*.

²⁴ See my "Die erworbenen Tugenden als richtige (nicht gute) Lebensführung: Ein genauerer Ausdruck ethischer Beschreibung," *Ethische Theorie praktisch*, ed. Franz Furger (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991) 19–35; "A New Distinction in Moral Theology: Being Good and Living Rightly," *Church* 5 (1989) 22–28.

²⁵ Klaus Demmer, "La competenzaa normativa del magistero ecclesiastico in morale," in *Fede Cristiana e Agire Morale*, eds. K. Demmer and B. Schüller (Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 1980) 144–69; *Deuten und Handeln* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1985); "Erwägungen zum intrinsece malum," *Gregorianum* 68 (1987) 613–37; *Leben in Menschenhand* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1987); "Sittlich handeln als Zeugnis geben," *Gregorianum* 4 (1983) 453–85; "Sittlich handeln aus Erfahrung," *Gregorianum* 59 (1978) 661–90.

²⁶ J. Fuchs, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1984); *Christian Morality: The Word Becomes Flesh* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1987); *Essere del Signore* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1981); *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1983).

²⁷ L. Janssens, "Norms and Priorities in a Love Ethics," *Louvain Studies* 6 (1977) 207–38; "Ontic Good and Ontic Evil," *Louvain Studies* 12 (1987) 62–82.

²⁸ R. McCormick, "Bishops as Teachers and Jesuits as Listeners," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 28 (1986); *Notes on Moral Theology, 1981 through 1984* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984).

²⁹ B. Schüller, *Die Begründung sittlicher Urteile*; "The Debate on the Specific Character of Christian Ethics," in *Readings in Moral Theology 2: The Distinctiveness of Christian Ethics*, ed. C. Curran and R. McCormick (New York: Paulist, 1980) 207–33; "Direct Killing/Indirect Killing," in C. Curran and R. McCormick, eds., *Readings in Moral Theology* 1.138–57; "The Double Effect in Catholic Thought: A Reevaluation," in *Doing Evil to Achieve Good*, ed. R. McCormick and P. Ramsey (Chicago: Loyola University, 1978) 165–92; "Gewissen und Schuld," in *Das Gewissen*, ed. Josef Fuchs (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1979) 34–55; "Neuere Beiträge zum Thema 'Begründung sittlicher Normen'," in *Theologische Berichte* 4, ed. Franz Furger (Zürich: Benziger, 1974) 109–81; *Wholly Human* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1985).

³⁰ See also Bernard Hoose, *Proportionalism: The American Debate and Its European Roots* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1987).

³¹ Schüller rightly argues that, regardless of one's method of moral reasoning, charity remains the descriptive category for goodness; see "The Double Effect" esp. 167–69.

faith life. In scholastic language they are the acquired virtues and not the infused ones which, like charity, God gives through grace. Certainly these cardinal virtues can be "informed" by a community's faith life.³² But the virtues can be pursued by anyone who intends and exercises them rightly. Thus we can urge each other to acquire them whether we are sitting in the same pew or on the same park bench.

To scrutinize the classical list of the cardinal virtues, we turn to Aquinas's writings because they fulfill these two conditions: virtues concern rightly ordered lives, and acquired virtues are accessible to all people.³³ In the question on the cardinal virtues in the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas cited Ambrose, Gregory, Cicero, and Augustine, and with them named the four cardinal virtues as prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.³⁴ The virtues are called cardinal because they are "principal" that is they are *fundamental* to attaining the "rectitude of appetite" of virtuous living. That rectitude is central because "virtue not only confers the faculty of doing well, but also causes the good deed done."³⁵ This rectitude consists in ordering the appetitive and intellectual powers that enable us to act. Prudence orders our practical reason; justice orders the will or our intellectual appetite; temperance and fortitude perfect the passions, which are divided into the concupiscible or desiring power and the irascible or struggling power.³⁶ The four virtues are cardinal because they sufficiently order all those areas of our lives that are engaged in moral acting.³⁷ Moreover as principals they provide the basics for all right order in human action. They are necessary and sufficient conditions for describing an agent and an action as virtuous.

Despite its evident attractiveness, the classical list of the cardinal

³² Joseph Kotva, "An Appeal for a Christian Virtue Ethic," *Thought* 67 (1992) 158–180; "Christian Virtue Ethics and the 'Sectarian Temptation,'" *Heythrop Journal* 35 (1994) 35–52.

³³ See my "Distinguishing Charity as Goodness and Prudence as Rightness: A Key to Thomas' *Pars Secunda*," *The Thomist* 56 (1992) 407–26; *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologiae* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1992); Conrad van Ouwerkerk, *Caritas et Ratio: Etude sur le double principe de la vie morale chrétienne d'après S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Nijmegen: Drukkerij Gebr. Janssen, 1956); Jean Porter, "The Subversion of Virtue: Acquired and Infused Virtues in the *Summa theologiae*," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 1992 (Washington: Georgetown University, 1992) 19–42. Aquinas departs from Augustine on these two points, as is evident in his definition of virtue in *ST* 1–2, q. 55, a. 4.

³⁴ See Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1966); Jean Porter, "Perennial and Timely Virtues: Practical Wisdom, Courage and Temperance," in *Changing Values and Virtues*, ed. Dietmar Mieth and Jacques Pohier (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987) 60–68; *The Recovery of Virtue* (Louisville: Westminster, 1990). On the first proponents, see John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 248–49.

³⁵ *ST* 1–2, q. 61, a. 1 corp.

³⁶ *ST* 1–2, q. 61, a. 2 and 3.

³⁷ See Jean Porter, "The Unity of the Virtues and the Ambiguity of Goodness," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 21 (1993) 137–64.

virtues fails to serve contemporary needs for three reasons. First, it is deceptively simple and inadequate. Second, a different anthropology has more recently emerged that insists on the relationality of the human. Finally, as if to prove this anthropological claim, philosophers and theologians have proposed virtues that are premised on our relationality.

First, Thomas's structure insists on a hierarchal uniformity that does not anticipate or admit conflict.³⁸ Since each virtue has domain both in the particular part of the subject in which it inheres and in the dimension of activity of which it is principal, there are no shared grounds among them by which the claims of one could appropriately challenge or contradict the claims of the other. Thus matters that pertain to the irascible powers concern courage, while those of the practical intellect concern prudence. Similarly, any discussion about the external operation of an activity is governed by justice, and the balance of desires is governed by temperance. The components of the human and the act are so distinctively divided that the claims of one do not overlap into the claims of another.

Even if they did overlap, so as to share similar subjects or similar matter, they could not conflict because Thomas argues that they are hierarchally distinguishable. The only intellectual virtue among the cardinal virtues, prudence, is not that tepid little virtue that warns against taking bold steps. It looks forward to the overall end of life and sets the agenda for attaining that end³⁹ and all intermediate ends. It discerns and sets the standards of moral action.⁴⁰ Moreover it enjoys nearly the same function and authority over the moral virtues that charity does with the infused virtues: as charity unites the infused virtues, prudence unites and connects the moral virtues.⁴¹ In short, the "whole matter of moral virtues falls under the one rule of prudence."⁴² With Aristotle, Thomas upholds the absolute priority of prudence; no acquired virtue is more important.⁴³

But what does prudence govern? It governs the three moral virtues. Though the virtues of temperance and fortitude order ourselves interiorly,⁴⁴ justice orders all our operations or exterior actions.⁴⁵ For this reason, justice provides the real mean to human action.⁴⁶

³⁸ Rarely does Thomas admit in the *Summa theologiae* the possibility of conflict where two parties have legitimate claims; for an exception, see 1, q. 113, a. 8: "Whether there can be strife or discord among the angels?"

³⁹ *ST* 1-2, q. 66, a. 3 ad 3.

⁴⁰ *ST* 1-2.64.1 corp, ad 1, and 3 corp; 2-2.23.6 corp; 47.7 corp and ad 2. See Domenico Capone, *Intorno alla verità morale* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1951) 19 ff., 46 ff.; Karl-Wilhelm Merks, *Theologische Grundlegung der sittlichen Autonomie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1978) 125ff.

⁴¹ *ST* 1-2.66.2 corp; 68.5 corp.

⁴² *ST* 1-2.65.1 ad 3.

⁴³ *ST* 1.79.12 corp; 2-2.47.6 and 7.

⁴⁴ *ST* 2-2.58.3 corp and 8 corp.

⁴⁵ *ST* 2-2.58.2 corp and ad 4; 58.3 corp.

⁴⁶ *ST* 1-2.64.2.

Sometimes, however, we need to establish the mean with regard to ourselves, that is, we need to attain the balance of our own concupiscible and irascible powers in order to become more rightly ordered. In these instances we pursue temperance and fortitude; yet we pursue them eventually in order to be more just.

Thomas's organizing principle is hierarchical: the overall end of the cardinal virtues is that practical reason can properly direct the agent to be just. Thus a virtue is greater wherein more rational good can shine forth.⁴⁷ Now justice expresses that greater good both by the fact that it is in the rational appetite and thus nearer reason, and because it alone orders not only the agent, but the agent in relationship to others. For this reason justice is the chief moral virtue.⁴⁸

This classification illustrates three important points. First, justice is the only relational virtue. Second, since the virtues are distinguished by their matters and their subject, the virtues do not have competitive claims against each other. Moreover, because there is a hierarchy according to their relationship to reason, where temperance is subordinate to fortitude and then to justice, *if* there were some matter that concerned the claims of two virtues, the claims of justice would take simple priority. Finally, the virtues of the passions are auxiliary to justice. Justice in a manner of speaking, then, governs all our actions.⁴⁹

If we return to Mrs. Bergmeier's case, we can see how Thomas would have assessed her situation, namely by asking whether what she does is just. Clearly, Mrs. Bergmeier's justice is evident both in her actions for her Jewish neighbors and in her roles as mother and wife. But the issue at hand is whether she can engage in an act of intercourse outside of her marriage, despite her legitimate concerns. Thomas would argue, I think, that justice is about giving each one their due and that the due in marriage is, among other goods, exclusive access to marital relations.⁵⁰ Thus justice in marriage is precisely founded on a marriage contract and that contract is absolutely exclusive: only the two partners may express themselves in sexual intercourse. Moreover, Mr. and Mrs. Bergmeier's marital rights are given them not by their choice but by the institution of marriage that they have entered; it is not their prerogative to suspend that contract. Justice requires, therefore, that Mrs. Bergmeier be a model wife and that she not engage in intercourse with the guard or with anyone other than her husband.

This assessment is not directly connected to the thinking of the deontologists mentioned earlier. Their objection was based on the notion of intrinsic evil, that any act of sexual intercourse outside of the context of marriage is intrinsically wrong. John Dedek has repeatedly

⁴⁷ *ST* 1–2.66.1.

⁴⁸ *ST* 1–2.66.4.

⁴⁹ *ST* 1–2.61.2–4; 66.4 corp; 2–2.58.1 corp.

⁵⁰ See *ST* Supplement 41–68.

demonstrated that the concept of intrinsic evil was foreign to Thomas. It was developed a century after Thomas's death by Durandus of Saint Pourçain, probably the most outspoken opponent of Thomism in the 14th century.⁵¹ Thus Thomas's own argument is based not on some absolute moral quality intrinsic to the act, but on the singular claim of justice. Could there be any other claim made on Mrs. Bergmeier that could justify the violation of justice in marriage? Not in Thomas's thesis, for there is no other primary virtue that could compete with or supersede the claims that justice makes on Mrs. Bergmeier. Since the only question for Thomas here concerns the just way of acting, he has no way of counterbalancing the universal claim that out of justice all spouses must reserve their acts of intercourse for one another.

There is something deeply disturbing about the inadequacy of this answer. Other issues should have been raised. Isn't there something specific about Mrs. Bergmeier's case that merits further attention? Do we not want at least to introduce the specific context of her marriage: that this marriage is during a time of war, where one spouse is imprisoned, the health of the other is dramatically declining, and the welfare of the children is terribly endangered? Do we not also need to ask some questions about Mrs. Bergmeier's care for herself in the face of such an obvious act of compromise? There are many questions that we need to ask, and justice alone does not provide a sufficient context for analyzing the rightness of her activity.

The complaint, then, is that justice alone is insufficient. This insufficiency can be seen from another perspective. There are now newly coined virtues, that are often in part descriptive of justice, sometimes even hyphenating justice. Walter Burghardt in describing the characteristics of social justice spirituality refers us to Fred Kammer's book, *Doing Faithjustice*. Commenting on Kammer's title, Burghardt explains, "Not faith *and* justice; one word, a newly coined word . . . faithjustice. This is the faith that does justice. Each word is significant in itself, but it is the two in combination that shape a spirituality of justice."⁵²

The most common coupling occurs between justice and love. Daniel Maguire writes, "In the Bible, justice and love are hyphenated in a way that is 'good news to the poor' (Luke 4:18)."⁵³ Likewise Margaret Farley holds that the norm for sexual ethics is "just love," that is, our love must be founded on justice, and correspondingly our justice must be

⁵¹ John Dedek, "Intrinsically Evil Acts: The Emergence of a Doctrine," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 50 (1983) 191–226; "Intrinsically Evil Acts: An Historical Study of the Mind of St. Thomas," *The Thomist* 43 (1979) 385–413; "Moral Absolutes in the Predecessors of St. Thomas," *TS* 38 (1977) 654–80.

⁵² Walter Burghardt, "Characteristics of Social Justice Spirituality," *Origins* 24.9 (1994) 157–64, at 159; Fred Kammer, *Doing Faithjustice* (New York: Paulist, 1991).

⁵³ Daniel Maguire, "The Primacy of Justice in Moral Theology," *Horizons* 10 (1983) 72–85, at 74.

loving.⁵⁴ Similarly, William Werpehowski argues for a professional ethics rooted in the vocations of love and justice.⁵⁵ These insights clearly depend on the important writings of Reinhold Niebuhr who argued that love and justice must define one another: alone each virtue is insufficient.⁵⁶

Moreover, Pope John Paul II prefers the concept of solidarity, a concept that on the one hand seeks equality, but on the other hand expresses a loving bondedness among its members.⁵⁷ Again we find at least implicitly the two virtues of love and justice shaping and defining one another.

Paul Ricoeur studies these two virtues as dialectical. Rather than reducing one to the other, eliding the two together, or placing the two in a pure and simple dichotomy, Ricoeur places them in a "tension between two distinct and sometimes opposed claims."⁵⁸ Ricoeur's insight that the virtues are distinct and at times opposing stands in contrast with Thomas's strategy of the cardinal virtues where justice is supported by fortitude and temperance and none contradicts, opposes, or challenges the claims of the other. Thus only when one cardinal virtue stands on equal footing with another cardinal virtue can there be a dialectical tension in which the virtues challenge and define one another, and, as Ricoeur suggests, "may even be the occasion for the invention of responsible forms of behavior."⁵⁹

The unity of the virtues that Thomas offers us, however, is one prompted not only by prudence interconnecting the other three, but also by the privileged place that justice holds. The virtues enjoy a unity in part because justice has no competition. That insight stands in sharp contrast to contemporary figures who find justice alone insufficient and who posit another competing virtue, like love.

Contemporary virtue ethics acknowledges, then, the possibility that cardinal virtues could be in competition with one another. Indeed,

⁵⁴ Margaret Farley, "An Ethic for Same Sex Relations," in *A Challenge To Love*, ed. Robert Nugent (New York: Crossroad, 1986) 93–106; *Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

⁵⁵ William Werpehowski, "The Professions: Vocations to Justice and Love," in *The Professions in Ethical Context*, ed. Francis Eigo (Villanova: Villanova University, 1986) 1–24.

⁵⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D. B. Robertson (Louisville: Westminster, 1957); on a similar insight see Karen Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987); José Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1974).

⁵⁷ See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987); *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical "On Social Concern"*, ed. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989); Howard Gray, "Religious Life's Spirit of Solidarity," *Origins* 23.10 (1993) 173–76.

⁵⁸ Paul Ricoeur, "Love and Justice," in *Radical Pluralism and Truth: David Tracy and the Hermeneutics of Religion*, ed. Werner G. Jeanrond and Jennifer L. Rike (New York: Crossroad, 1991) 187–202, at 196.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 197.

William Spohn contends that most virtue ethicists presume that the virtues conflict.⁶⁰ In that presupposition they admit a certain congruency with deontologists and proportionalists, that is, that conflict among key directing guidelines is inherent to all methods of moral reasoning.

For instance, the mixed deontologist Frankena, after presenting the two fundamental principles of beneficence and justice, raises "the problem of possible conflict" between the two principles and writes, "I see no way out of this. It does seem to me that the two principles may come into conflict, both at the level of individual action and at that of social policy, and I know of no formula that will always tell us how to solve such conflicts."⁶¹ Likewise in an enormously influential work, Tom Beauchamp and James Childress argue that "there is no premier and overriding authority in either the patient or the physician and no preeminent principle in biomedical ethics—not even the admonition to act in the patient's best interest."⁶²

If, as in other methods, the cardinal virtues conflict with one another, then the function of the virtue of prudence greatly expands. In the more harmonious classical list of cardinal virtues, prudence's primary task was to determine justice when dealing with our actions, temperance when dealing with our desires, and fortitude when dealing with our struggles. But in this new proposal, prudence would have to name not only what the claim of each particular virtue is, but also what priority that claim enjoys.

Stanley Hauerwas seems to see this point when he argues that we have the task of sorting out "conflicting loyalties" throughout our lives. That sorting out means that in the long run we are to live a life that ethically incorporates the variety of relational claims which are made on us. This we do through the narrative of the lives we live.⁶³ Thus the virtues are related to one another not in some inherent way, as they seem to be in the classical list of the cardinal virtues. Nor do they complement one another per se. Rather, they become integrated in the life of the prudent person who lives them. The unity of the virtues is found not in some theoretical apportioning of the cardinal virtues to specific powers or matters. It is found rather in the final living out of lives shaped by prudence anticipating and responding to virtuous claims.

So the insufficiency of the classical list of cardinal virtues prompts us to find virtues that satisfactorily encompass the basic and at times competitive claims to which a virtuous person must respond. That

⁶⁰ Spohn, "The Return of Virtue Ethics."

⁶¹ William Frankena, *Ethics*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973) 52.

⁶² Tom Beauchamp and James Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (New York: Oxford University, 1989) 211.

⁶³ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981) 144.

insight then prompts our second concern: to consider the anthropology that underlies the cardinal virtues.

The turn to the subject has prompted many to abandon a classicist anthropology that examined humanity by asking “*what* is it?” The contemporary ethicist does not examine humanity as something to be known, but reflects on humanity as knowing and asks “*who* are we?” In the older design, there was an investigation of what the human has and does. Thus, Thomas divided the human according to several powers and argued that the virtues perfect each of them. Like others,⁶⁴ I believe that to have a viable anthropology is to understand ourselves as agents and not as objects; moreover, as agents we are always relational.⁶⁵ Thus virtues do not perfect what we have or what we do; rather they perfect who we are in the mode of our being, which is as being in relationships. Virtues do not perfect powers or “things” inside of us, but rather ways that we are.⁶⁶

A PROPOSAL

In this context, I propose my own list of the cardinal virtues. It includes justice, fidelity, self-care, and prudence.

As persons, we are relational in three ways: generally, specifically, and uniquely.⁶⁷ And each of these relational ways of being demands a cardinal virtue. As a relational being in general, we are called to justice.⁶⁸ As a relational being specifically, we are called to fidelity.⁶⁹ As a relational being uniquely, we are called to self-care. These three virtues are cardinal. Unlike Thomas’s structure, none is ethically prior to the other; they have equally urgent claims and they should be pur-

⁶⁴ For the turn to the subject, see Bernard Lonergan, *Collection* (New York: Herder, 1967); *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974); *The Subject* (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 1968); Michael Himes, “The Human Person in Contemporary Theology. From Human Nature to Authentic Subjectivity,” in *Introduction to Christian Ethics: A Reader*, ed. Ronald Hamel and Kenneth Himes (New York: Paulist, 1989) 49–62.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, Augustine claims to support the philosophers in this, “that the life of the wise man should be social” (*City of God* 19.5, trans. Henry Bettenson [New York: Viking Penguin, 1984] 858). I am expanding Augustine’s claim to all humanity as both descriptive and prescriptive. Stephen Pope develops this relational anthropology in “The Order of Love and Recent Catholic Ethics: A Constructive Proposal,” *TS* 52 (1991) 255–88.

⁶⁶ Paul Lauritzen has done an important synthesis of recent works on morality and the self in which he argues that the turn to narrative ethics enables us to see both that the self as fragmented becomes integrated by the narrative one lives and that, as he writes, “the narrative self is necessarily a social and relational self.” A relational view of the self requires us to rethink our understanding, not only of the self, but of morality (“The Self and Its Discontents,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22 [1994] 189–210, at 206).

⁶⁷ I prescind here from charity, which concerns our relationship with God.

⁶⁸ See my “Learning the Virtue of Justice,” *Church* 9/3 (1993) 38–40.

⁶⁹ See my “The Virtue of Fidelity,” *Church* 9/2 (1993) 38–39.

sued as ends in themselves. Thus we are not called to be faithful and self-caring in order to be just, nor are we called to be self-caring and just in order to be faithful. None is auxiliary to the others. Each is a distinctive virtue, none being a subset or subcategory of the others. They are cardinal. The fourth cardinal virtue is prudence, which determines what constitutes the just, faithful, and self-caring way of life for an individual.

Justice

To consider each virtue I turn to the third task of demonstrating that many recent expressions of specific virtues point toward the relational configuration that I am offering. First, our relationality generally is always to be directed by an ordered appreciation for the common good in which we treat all people as equal. Apart from all specific relations, we belong to humanity and are expected to respond to all its members in general, equally and impartially. Paul Ricoeur notes that from Aristotle to Rawls *justice* is always associated with equality.⁷⁰

I cannot recall where I read or heard the remark, but I remember John Rawls stating that a child's earliest moral insight occurs when the child witnesses an unequal distribution of food, drink, or some other object and remarks, "That's unfair." That the child can recognize that inequality is unfair does not mean, however, that the child knows what fairness is. But the child does know that in any human grouping equality governs in general the participation of the members. This insight can lead to the claim of Lawrence Kohlberg that the aim of the moral life is to become impartial and to recognize the universal claims of equality.

But while Rawls and Kohlberg argue for justice as a principle, in this article we understand justice as a virtue. As a virtue, justice is not simply concerned with external activity. Rather, as Bernard Williams notes, justice is about ordering all our interior dispositions so that the claim of equality originates from within.⁷¹

Fidelity

If justice urges us to treat all people equally, then *fidelity* makes different claims on us. Fidelity is the virtue that nurtures and sustains the bonds of those special relationships that we enjoy whether by

⁷⁰ Ricoeur, "Love and Justice" 195.

⁷¹ Bernard Williams, "Justice as a Virtue," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelia Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California, 1980) 189–99. Besides Maguire, see Seamus Murphy, "The Many Ways of Justice," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 26/2 (1994) 1–40.

blood, marriage, love, or sacrament. Fidelity requires that we treat with special care those who are closer to us. If justice rests on impartiality and universality, fidelity rests on partiality and particularity.⁷²

Obviously naming fidelity as the second cardinal virtue is a development of the insights of Niebuhr, Ricoeur, and others who wrote about a love that challenges justice. I prefer to name this virtue fidelity, rather than love, because of a certain confusion in the use of the word "love." Generally speaking, Roman Catholics tend to consider love as the basis of all virtues. For instance, Thomas distinguishes charity or Christian love from the four cardinal virtues. If we want to know what to do in the concrete, we must turn not to charity, which is about union with God, but to the cardinal virtues, which are about right living.⁷³ As Karl Rahner would say, charity or Christian love is transcendental.⁷⁴ But Protestant theologians, as we have seen, tend to use love much more concretely as being as categorical as justice. Thus, in a debate between the Protestant philosopher Frankena and Catholic theologians McCormick and Schüller,⁷⁵ Frankena argued that love was not inclusive of justice because love is particular and justice is universal. The Catholic theologians responded, equating love with charity and arguing that love seeks justice. With good Thomistic instincts, they saw justice without competition and love of God and neighbor as prior to all virtue, as universal, and as impartial.

Fidelity here is admittedly like Niebuhr's love. It is also like the claim that Carol Gilligan made in an important work.⁷⁶ Gilligan criticized Kohlberg for arguing that full moral development was found in the person who could reason well about justice as impartial and universal. She countered that the human must aim for the impartiality of justice as well as for the development of particular bonds. In effect, I think, she would be quite comfortable with naming fidelity as articulating this different voice.

Fidelity also captures the concern of contemporary moral theolo-

⁷² See a similar insight in Spohn, "The Return" 72. In several questions dealing with charity, Aquinas argues that we have greater obligations to those with whom we enjoy specific relationships; see *ST* 2-2.31.3 and 32.9. See the tension between love in general and love in particular in William Werpehowski, "'Agape' and Special Relations," in *The Love Commandments*, ed. Edmund Santurri and William Werpehowski (Washington: Georgetown University, 1992) 138-56.

⁷³ For the formality of charity, see Gerard Gilleman, *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1959) 29-45, esp. 42-45.

⁷⁴ Karl Rahner, "The Commandment of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments," *Theological Investigations* 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) 439-539.

⁷⁵ See McCormick, using Schüller against Frankena, in his "A Commentary on the Commentaries," in *Doing Evil to Achieve Good*, ed. Richard McCormick and Paul Ramsey (Chicago: Loyola University, 1978) 193-267, esp. 241-54.

⁷⁶ Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1982).

gians and ethicists. Fidelity expresses, for instance, the covenant ethics of the late Paul Ramsey,⁷⁷ the friendship ethics of Gilbert Meilaender⁷⁸ and Paul Wadell,⁷⁹ the loyalty ethics of George Fletcher,⁸⁰ and the commitment ethics of Margaret Farley.⁸¹

Though it may be new to suggest these two virtues as distinct and at times competitive, the stuff of a good story has long been based on the tension between these two claims. For instance, the drama of Antigone is caught as she stands between supporting a universal peace for her whole city and obeying Creon's law, or else tending to her brother who remains unburied outside the city walls. But Greek culture is not the only setting for conflicts between justice and fidelity. The American movie industry regularly depicts justice calling us away from our special relationships. A lawyer abandons her father's defense and becomes his accuser of crimes against humanity in *The Music Box*. A wife rejects her husband's commands and participates in a civil rights demonstration in *A Long Walk Home*, and a mother campaigns against apartheid while a teenage daughter feels neglected in *A World Apart*. Curiously, contrary to Gilligan's arguments, these films depict women choosing the universal claims of justice over the particular claims of fidelity. As if in a gender reversal, two recent movies depict the opposite: a young male choosing fidelity over justice. In *Scent of a Woman* a prep school student decides not to report on his friends despite the harm that they have caused to the entire school. And in *The Terminator* a boy is called to save the world, but decides instead to save his mother first, risking humanity's entire existence. From *Antigone* to *The Terminator*, from the heights to the depths of human drama, we watch in suspense as characters are caught between what Ricoeur calls "two distinct and at times opposed claims."

Self-Care

Neither of these virtues, however, addresses the unique relationship that I as a moral agent have with myself. Still love or *care for self* enjoys a considered role in our tradition.⁸² For instance, Aquinas argued against suicide because it offends both justice by depriving the

⁷⁷ Paul Ramsey, *The Patient as Person: Explorations in Medical Ethics* (New Haven: Yale University, 1970); *The Essential Paul Ramsey: A Collection*, ed. William Werpehowski and Stephen Crocco (New Haven: Yale University, 1994).

⁷⁸ Gilbert Meilaender, *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1981).

⁷⁹ Paul Wadell, *Friendship and the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1989).

⁸⁰ George Fletcher, *Loyalty: An Essay on the Morality of Relationships* (New York: Oxford University, 1993).

⁸¹ See note 54 above.

⁸² Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in Saint Augustine* (New Haven: Yale, 1980).

common good of one's life and charity by doing harm to oneself.⁸³ Thomas, through his order of charity,⁸⁴ developed the love of self that Stephen Pope describes in his latest work.⁸⁵ I prefer to avoid calling this virtue "self-love," however, because of the same confusion about the word love, though Edward Vacek calls it "self-love" in a new work in which he discusses the triple end of the love command: self, neighbor and God.⁸⁶

I also prefer "self-care" to "self-esteem" or "self-respect."⁸⁷ Admittedly there is an extensive literature on self-esteem and considerable debate about what role it ought to play in our lives.⁸⁸ But the moral task is to take care of oneself and that includes, among other tasks, self-esteem.⁸⁹ Thus self-esteem is a subcategory of self-care, just as "the promotion" of one's own health is a subcategory of self-care.⁹⁰ In short, we each have a unique responsibility to care for ourselves, affectively, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Some Christian activists may balk at self-care. Some could go so far as to note that if Jesus Christ let self-care be a cardinal virtue we would never have been redeemed by the blood of the cross. But we have every reason to believe that the historical Jesus took care of himself; we need only think of how often he is contrasted with John the Baptist. Likewise we have no reason to suppose that Jesus suffered from lack of self-esteem. In fact, I think we can say that it was precisely

⁸³ *ST* 2-2.64.5 ad 1.

⁸⁴ The concern for self-care runs throughout the *Summa*, from 1.5.1 corp and 48.1, which describe how all nature seeks its own perfection, to 1-2.27.3 that insists it is natural to prefer oneself over others, and 29.4 that states the impossibility of hating oneself. In 2-2, Aquinas argues that though inordinate self-love is the source of sin (25.4, 28.4 ad 1), self-love belongs to the order of charity and is prior to neighbor love (25.12, 26.4). He adds that charity is the source of peace which aims at ending conflict not only with others but also within oneself (29.1). By introducing self-care into the constellation of the cardinal virtues I believe that I am developing Thomas's own thoughts.

⁸⁵ Stephen Pope, *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1994); see also his "Expressive Individualism and True Self-Love: A Thomistic Perspective," *Journal of Religion* 71.3 (1991) 384-99.

⁸⁶ Edward Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine: The Heart of Christian Ethics* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1994) 239-73.

⁸⁷ Until recently I preferred self-esteem; see my "The Virtue of Self-esteem," *Church* 9/4 (1993) 37-39. See also Stephen Massey, "Is Self-Respect a Moral or a Psychological Concept?" *Ethics* 93 (1983) 246-61; David Sachs, "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 10 (1981) 346-60.

⁸⁸ See Christina Hoff Sommers, *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

⁸⁹ Therapists use the term self-care in professional ethics; e.g. L. S. Brown, "Ethical Issues in Feminist Therapy: Selected Topics," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 15 (1991) 324-33; Katherine M. Clarke, "Lessons from Feminist Therapy for Ministerial Ethics," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 48 (1994) 233-42.

⁹⁰ Marc Lappe, "Virtue and Public Health," in *Virtue and Medicine*, ed. Earl Shelp (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985) 289-303.

because Jesus knew the virtues of fidelity, justice, and self-care that the agony in the Garden was so painful. He was a man who loved God, humanity, his friends, and himself: his conflict, like all true conflicts, was to determine which relationship made the greater claim on him.

Prudence

Finally, *prudence* has the task of integrating the other three virtues into our lives, just as it did when it was among the classical list of the cardinal virtues.⁹¹ Thus prudence is always vigilant, looking to the future, not only trying to realize the claims of justice, fidelity, and self care in the here and now, but also calling us to anticipate occasions when each of these virtues can be more fully acquired. In this way prudence is clearly a virtue that pursues ends and effectively establishes the moral agenda for the person growing in these virtues.⁹² But these ends are not in opposition to nor in isolation from one another. Rather, prudence, in forming our narratives, helps each virtue to shape its end as more inclusive of the other two.

Conversely, by naming three other cardinal virtues, the prudential is now identified with justice, fidelity, and self-care. That is to say that any action or way of life that neglects the consideration of one of these virtues is itself wrong or imprudential. The prudent person now must consider the claims of all three.

CONCLUSION

On this note I conclude by finally giving the answer to the case of Mrs. Bergmeier that I should have given fifteen years ago. In evaluating the morality of her conduct, prudence advises us to ask questions about her triple self-understanding in having general, special, and unique relationships, each with a cardinal virtue. From the viewpoint of justice, she demonstrates an obvious concern for her neighbors and their equality; we note too that in her society she has also been a caring wife and mother. Until the point when she violated the institutional claims of marriage, she was true to her culture's institution of marriage. But this violation is not pursued for its own sake. From the viewpoint of fidelity, she has special bonds with her husband and children that distinguish her situation. Her husband's and children's health are in jeopardy, and she alone is the primary caregiver. Her absence leaves those others neglected. She chooses to engage in an action whose consequences mean new life, a child with whom she will probably have a particularly faithful relationship precisely because the conception and birth of that child led to the rescue of her other

⁹¹ Joseph Burroughs, *Prudence Integrating the Moral Virtues according to Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Washington: Catholic University, 1955).

⁹² See Daniel Mark Nelson, "Karl Rahner's Existential Ethics: A Critique Based on St. Thomas's Understanding of Prudence," *The Thomist* 51 (1987) 461-79; *The Priority of Prudence* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992).

children and husband. Finally, the claim of self-care is the real neuralgic point. We have no reason but to believe that Mrs. Bergmeier is a just and faithful person. But Mrs. Bergmeier decides to submit herself to the guard, and to carry, raise, and love a child who is the fruit of that loathful union. A person who lacks the virtue of self-care could not possibly endure the emotional burden of such a decision. Without that virtue, shame, self-loathing, and hatred would most likely materialize in her life and eventually become insurmountable. Only a person who can be as caring of herself as she is faithful to her husband and children and just in fighting for her fellow citizens could live with this decision. But knowing that is the task of prudence.

Inasmuch as this is all the information that the case provides, we conclude by simply acknowledging that practical wisdom will help Mrs. Bergmeier understand further, not only what these virtues mean in general, but what they mean specifically. Toward that end she will rely on her understanding both of herself and of her culture as it specifically determines and recommends the practices of these virtues. But whether she is in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Gulag, or anywhere else, she will deliberate better knowing that these cardinal virtues are being discussed elsewhere as well.

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