

Fortin's work has been criticized for insufficient attention to social concerns (he cites only one critic), and then explains this supposed inattention as a function of her overriding concern for personal conversion (96–98). Fortin's engagement with questions of culture and religion, with the crisis of institutions in Quebec, and her extensive published work on Dumont all make clear the inadequacy of such an evaluation. In the end, a representative selection of voices and a more developed analysis and synthesis would have served the reader better.

Nevertheless, this work is a helpful introduction for those who have little or no knowledge of the developments in francophone theology in North America. Its conversational tone, along with the author's analogies drawn from the work of European and anglophone North American theologians, will help readers situate themselves in what can initially appear to be alien territory. Most importantly, the presentation of Dumont and Grand'Maison can prepare readers for their own deeper engagement with the primary sources.

Gilles Mongeau, S.J.
Regis College, University of Toronto

Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method. By Christina A. Astorga. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014. Pp. xxviii + 571. \$50.

Astorga offers a magisterial examination of contemporary developments in Catholic moral theology. The book's size alone signals her desire to make a substantial contribution to theological ethics. She does this by providing a richly researched volume that demonstrates her command of a wide range of current ethical scholarship.

A. does not, however, simply intend to map the current state of the discipline. Rather, she seeks to advance "a new method" for social ethical reflection. Her proposal can be described as a desire to unify what traditionally has been called fundamental moral theology—that is, a concern for ethical methodology—with social ethics, or moral reflection on matters of social, political, and economic concern. Thus, what A. offers is a post-Vatican II fundamental social ethics, a manner of ethical analysis that interweaves the components of vision, norm, and choice in light of a "global optic" that appreciates the significance of cultural location and advances the liberation of marginalized peoples.

In three chapters, she treats the primacy of vision, the horizon that ought to mark moral theology. The chief components of this vision are a sensitivity to culture and its influence on the moral agent; the importance of story and narrative as constituting the human person ("we are storied people"); and reconnecting ethical reflection to the whole of Christian theology, including creation, the Trinity, Christology, and ecclesiology. The next three chapters are devoted to the "norms" of ethical reflection, drawn from the papal social teaching tradition. Here A. reads four of these documents—*Rerum novarum*, *Mater et magistra*, *Octogesima adveniens*, and *Centesimus annus*—through the lenses of "historical context," "norms and principles," "directives for action," and "critical excursus." The project concludes by examining the moral agent

in the face of “choice.” Only after situating choice in the preceding broader context does A. detail her proposed new method of ethical decision making, one that integrates the best of proportionalism—renamed “an ethics of holistic reasoning”—and virtue ethics. This method is actually more a process of spiritual discernment than an ethical calculus. Thus A. concludes with a contemporary reading of the principles of Ignatian discernment and their relevance for moral decision making.

The project makes several major contributions. A.’s casting of proportionalism as an “ethics of holistic reasoning” helpfully captures the human dynamism at work in what at times seemed an abstract controversy over the mechanics of the moral object. A. avows that proportionate reason and the principle of double effect are a sensitive moral discernment that strives to honor the complexity of difficult moral situations. This leads to a second contribution: A.’s situating ethical reflection within the context of the spiritual life, or the believer’s journey into the Divine. Her treatment of Ignatian modes of discernment within this magnum opus is a welcome addition to other efforts at overcoming the division between Catholic moral theology and Christian spirituality. Third, A. succeeds admirably in her synthesis of ethical approaches that at times appear disparate, namely, the moral analysis of human acts/choices and the development of personal virtue/character. Finally, her contention that “vision” is absolutely central to moral reflection and her biblically inspired vision that the goal of the moral life is the promotion of abundant life for all are convictions I found inspiring and moving.

Yet, there are puzzling omissions and oversights as well. First, there is no treatment of conscience and its role in ethical formation and deliberation. Given the importance of “choice” in A.’s project and the need for discernment in realizing values in situations of conflict, I found this omission curious.

Next, “Part II: Norm,” the second leg of her three-legged stool of moral method, is not adequately integrated into the rest of the text. A. fails to show how the directives for action she takes from the encyclical tradition inform the choices that confront the moral agent. This second section seems almost like a self-contained insert. This leads to another concern, namely, A. does not show how her method works in practice for agents faced with public policy challenges such as “abortion, immigration, healthcare reform [and] gay marriage” (xv). Providing a case study of her method as it informs ethical deliberation on a concrete social concern would have enhanced the book’s appeal.

Finally, while the epic overview offered here is truly impressive, its massive scope leads to a twofold liability. At times, there is both too little detail for the specialist in a particular area (for example, her examination of narrative theology and biblical criticism), yet her presentation also requires more understanding than less advanced students of theology are likely to have. The price of the book hurts its chances of adoption for undergraduate courses in moral theology.

Nonetheless, this is a brilliantly written work that provides a remarkable compendium of a complex discipline. We are in A.’s debt for her audacity and generosity in undertaking this study. The book’s introduction could provide advanced undergraduates with a comprehensive overview of postconciliar moral theology. This monograph is an instructive case study for graduate students of how one can strive to master the

sprawling field of theological ethics, with its daunting methodological pluralism and increasing cultural complexity, with both elegance and grace.

Bryan N. Massingale
Marquette University, Milwaukee

Sex, Violence, and Justice: Contraception and the Catholic Church. Aline H. Kalbian. Moral Traditions Series. Washington: Georgetown University, 2014. Pp. xii + 212. \$29.95.

In the first pages of her important study, Kalbian makes a strong contextualizing claim: “My analysis about contraception is not directed toward mediating or resolving an internal Catholic discussion” (2). She does, however, set out two ends: first, to “discover and express insights about the justificatory and rhetorical moves that a religious tradition makes as it responds to cultural and social forces” (2, 168); and second, to refresh or awaken in the reader’s mind the fact that any particular moral issue will inevitably be addressed from a plurality of ethical contexts (3–4, 168). Each chapter includes the magisterial approach, an explanation of contemporary debate among theologians, and a discussion of implications. K.’s chief insight is that the context of a particular instance of contraception dictates the moral framework used to justify the Church’s position: for condoms and HIV—sexual immorality; for emergency contraception after rape—abortion violence; for demographics and development—social justice and the common good.

K.’s prescinding from any effort to solve the contraception conundrum follows necessarily from her method. She distinguishes “theological ethics” from her own task of “religious ethics.” The theological ethicist is “constrained by duties of fidelity to a theological tradition” and by “assumptions about doctrine,” whereas the religious ethicist “has more freedom” (6), positioning herself on the margins of a tradition to read with “openness the texts, traditions, and reasoning of the Catholic Church from a more scholarly posture of critical reflection and analysis” (6). For K., doctrinal commitments bias the theological ethicist’s analysis of the history, validity, and applicability of moral norms. While K.’s religious ethics method is done from the margins of the ecclesial community she assesses and within which she was formed, it also approaches the question from the center of the contemporary Christian feminist theological tradition: “The most significant influence on the way I read and interpret religious traditions is feminist analysis” (7). K. deserves praise for largely refraining from explicit assessment of the truth character of the Church’s moral conclusions, but occasionally she marshals her feminist hermeneutic in a normative mode. She claims, for example, that John Paul II’s link between hedonism and rape is part of the Catholic hierarchy’s persistent, oppressive gender structuring (115, 174).

K.’s chapter on condoms and HIV/AIDS argues that “concerns about sexual propriety lead the Magisterium to articulate a position that is inconsistent, because it reduces condom use to a mere physical act. It fails to notice how radically different condom use