

Contrary to his claim at the outset, S. often makes remarks about the vast interpretative literature; yet he utilizes only about a dozen works, and almost all of these are in English. The references to the Weber scholar Wolfgang Schluchter are not to the original German editions but to translations. Regarding the two German works S. uses, one is a minor article while the other is a slim introduction to Weber. Many of the secondary sources S. uses were published in the 1980s and 1990s and he mostly ignores those which have appeared since 2000. Yet *Max Weber Studies* and the *Journal of Classical Sociology* have carefully researched articles on pertinent topics such as charisma, ethics, and theodicy. Despite these flaws, S. is to be commended for tackling such crucially important topics and anyone interested in Weber's thoughts about meaning and modernity should consider reading this book.

Christopher Adair-Toteff
University of South Florida/University of Kent

Conscience in Context: Historical and Existential Perspectives. By Stuart P. Chalmers. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014. Pp. xvii + 453. \$89.95.

This volume is an elaboration of Chalmers's doctoral thesis in theology at St. Patrick's College (Ireland) in 2008. Understanding this helps the reader to better focus one's expectations and to understand the systematic establishment and thematic development of the book. The academic character of a doctoral thesis thus shows the intertwining of the sense of the topic on the one hand, and, on the other, its linear and scholarly development.

The author's motivation comes from his analysis of the contemporary moral phenomenon which he characterizes as fragmentation often described by recent neo-Aristotelian philosophy and moral theology. The references to authors such as MacIntyre, Potter, and Pinckaers are indications of this. Following these authors C. describes the situation as "loss of cohesion and dynamism in moral theology" (27). He thereby adopts the diagnosis of the situation of the papal magisterium of the 1990s as expressed in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

This starting point guides the author in reconstructing the doctrine of conscience developed from Pauline writings, through the patristic era and medieval thought. An accurate presentation of the position of Bonaventure, Albert the Great, and Thomas Aquinas and the scholastic definition of the concept of *synderesis* occupy a central position in the first part of the book. The author concentrates on the position of Aquinas especially in regard to the distinction of conscience as both habitus and act. His analysis of the Thomistic text terminates with a clear preference for the second meaning: conscience takes a predominantly cognitive meaning of the objective moral order and relates to the act both as prior and subsequent judgment, that is, both as motivation of the act and its evaluation. Hence comes the idea that conscience is mainly "an act of judgment of practical reason, which is the conclusion of the process of an application of universal moral principles to the particular situation. Albert and Aquinas presented this in terms of a syllogism" (151).

The author's historical analysis does not explicitly consider the post-Scholastic evolution of the doctrine of conscience. For example, he does not discuss the theme of conscience in the humanistic tradition of the Renaissance, nor of the Protestant Reformation, and above all does not consider the importance of the dialogue between theology and philosophy of modern thought, as in Kant and his concept of autonomous subject. This lack of openness to the Renaissance and modern thought is also detected in the systematic section of the volume (chaps. 4–6) where the author elaborates on the nature and function of conscience in connection with the concept of virtue and the human call to holiness.

Regarding the function of conscience the author insists on the cognitive function in the sense of a deductive operation. He refers to the concept of truth in a problematic relationship between the ontological and practical level (citing particularly Josef Pieper and Joseph Ratzinger). The theme of virtue also plays a role in this relationship. Conscience is connected to the order of virtues, and, according to the author, comes into play especially with prudence “in its cognitive functions of seeing and judging the truth and in its prescriptive function of directing what is chosen to be done” (296).

The final chapter of the book provides an outline of theological readings regarding the gift of the Holy Spirit and the role of conscience in the *imitatio et sequela Christi*, in the formation of conscience, and to the dimension of *communio* as the key context for Christian conscience. The pneumatological, christological, and ecclesiological dimensions thus become elements of a theology of conscience. The stamp of this section of the book is marked by a strong spiritual and pedagogical inspiration that clearly has an important value for the Christian vision of conscience.

The author concludes his work with some summary insights in a retrospective look on the itinerary taken in the book. Reading this book is beneficial for the historical and systematic information it provides. The work must be framed mainly in a theological-ethical context in the sense of fundamental morality. Its title, *Conscience in Context*, arouses great and stimulating expectations, especially in relation to the category of context. However, the work does not add sufficient hermeneutic, methodological relevance to this category. The vision of conscience is insufficiently related to the historical condition of the moral subject. And, above all, the lack of consideration of an anthropology of conscience (where is the reference to *Gaudium et Spes* 16?) creates an unbalanced relationship between the ontological approach and consideration of context as a manifestation of human subjectivity and creativity of conscience.

The desire for deeper study of these aspects remains open.

Antonio Autiero
University of Münster (emeritus)

University Ethics: How Colleges Can Build and Benefit from a Culture of Ethics. By James F. Keenan. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. Pp. vii + 281. \$34.

James Keenan's latest book compellingly argues that American universities (including Catholic universities) are failing to take ethics seriously within the confines of their