

Knowing the Natural Law: From Precepts and Inclinations to Deriving Oughts. By Steven J. Jensen. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2015. Pp. ix + 238. \$34.95.

The Catholic doctrine of the natural law has long been associated with the view that moral conclusions can be derived from empirical or metaphysical knowledge of human nature. As such, it has been widely criticized on the grounds that it rests on an illegitimate inference from “is” to “ought.” About 50 years ago, a number of Catholic moral thinkers, beginning with Germain Grisez and John Finnis, attempted to respond to this charge, but not in such a way as to reject the premises of their critics. They agree that it is logically impossible to derive moral precepts from broadly factual knowledge, but argue that the natural law theory of Thomas Aquinas, at least, does not commit this error. Rather, the natural law as Aquinas presents it rests on self-evident first principles of practical reason, which emerge out of practical reason’s spontaneous grasp of basic goods. On this showing, not only does practical reason provide the necessary starting points for morality, it operates in such a way as to generate substantive, authoritative moral precepts. Advocates of this view, now known as the new natural law (NNL), do not necessarily deny that morality is grounded in human nature, but they insist that at the logical and epistemological level, we always move from the deliverances of practical reason to some insight into the human and natural good, never the reverse.

The NNL has generated an extraordinary amount of controversy. Jensen’s book is an intervention in this debate, which stands squarely within the tradition of the redoubtable Ralph McInerny, who argued for the epistemological, as well as the metaphysical dependence of the natural law on speculative knowledge of human nature. However, J.’s book stands out for its analytical subtlety and its forceful engagement with the details of the NNL. In order to develop his critique, Jensen focuses on the same text that plays a central role for defenders of the NNL, namely, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, in which Aquinas claims that the diverse precepts of the natural law are ordered and unified by their relation to natural human inclinations. The difficulty with this approach, as J. himself notes, is that this article is not focused on knowledge of natural law, but rather, on its rational coherence. By focusing on this text, J. allows his interlocutors to set the terms of the debate, and he gives less attention than might be warranted to what Aquinas says elsewhere about the precepts of the natural law and their derivation from first principles. At the same time, his approach has the advantage of allowing him to focus on the analytical arguments central to the NNL, and to develop his argument along the lines suggested by Aquinas himself in his treatment of the inclinations.

He begins by identifying the different ways in which knowledge can be said to be speculative or practical, in order to make the point that it is misleading, at best, to speak of pure practical reason. The first principle of practical reason itself presupposes the first speculative principle of non-contradiction. It is amplified through fundamental inclinations towards elements of the human good, as the NNL also claims. However, these inclinations are significant because they provide the basis for a general knowledge of the goods proper to human functions, which can then be turned to practical use. This does not involve any kind of illegitimate inference from factual to moral claims, because nature itself is structured in normatively significant ways. More generally,

practical knowledge is not a distinctive kind of knowledge, nor does practical reason as such have any kind of distinct normative significance. Practical knowledge is simply knowledge which is in some way relevant to our practical aims, and the criteria for relevance are determined by the natural structures of the will, including above all the orientation of the will towards the agent's overall perfection and happiness.

It is impossible in the scope of a brief review to do full justice to this complex, carefully argued book. This reviewer was not always persuaded by J.'s readings of Aquinas, but he does succeed in his overall aim, by showing that for Aquinas, practical knowledge presupposes speculative knowledge at many points, and in multiple ways. The NNL analysis of moral knowledge in terms of basic goods, which do an astonishing amount of normative work, offers an impoverished view of practical reasoning and an implausible reading of Aquinas. J.'s welcome book makes this clear.

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Jesus and the Last Supper. By Brant Pitre. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. Pp. xiv + 590. \$37.53.

The relation between Jesus, the Last Supper, and the Christian Eucharist has been one of the more interesting and significant topics in New Testament studies. Pitre has added a large and dense volume to the already extensive literature on the topic.

P.'s aim and method are both very clear. His aim is to demonstrate that one can plausibly claim that the historical Jesus deliberately instituted a new cultic meal as the eschatological realization of the restored Israel. Jesus did this with full consciousness of his messiahship and role as the new Moses. In doing so he established his disciples as "a kind of eschatological priesthood" (515). Throughout, his main aim is to connect the Last Supper and therefore the Eucharist with Jesus's eschatological intentions. In the course of the work P. shows an admirable control not only of the New Testament material but also of the Old Testament, and in particular, Second Temple Judaism.

P.'s method is basically threefold. He first investigates the plausibility of the New Testament evidence in light of the context of the history and literature of Israel, then the coherence with other evidence about Jesus. P.'s third move is to relate this material to the early Christian experience. In the process P. carefully weighs evidence against and for his thesis. In the process he acknowledges the perils of trying to establish the *ipsissima verba Jesu*. Instead, in line with his effort to find plausible solutions, he aims to uncover the *substantia verba*, that is, the basic content of what Jesus said.

The book begins by linking Jesus to Moses. As the New Moses Jesus establishes a new "Bread of the Presence" (see Exod 25:23–30) and a new "Blood of the Covenant" (see Exod 24), linking the latter specifically with his redemptive role as suffering servant. One of his more innovative arguments is to boldly counter the common assumption that Israelites would have been horrified by the consumption of blood by claiming that the prohibition referred to the blood of animals, not Jesus's human blood (104–11). P. then moves to a consideration of the New Manna, particular in light of the Bread of