

MORAL THEOLOGY – TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Thinking Catholic Interreligiously
 Convener: Daniel Cosacchi, Marywood University
 Moderator: Rachel Bundang, Santa Clara University
 Presenters: Molly Greening, Loyola University Chicago
 David Kwon, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

This session was comprised of two papers, each approximately 25-30 minutes in length, followed by a question and answer session that filled the remainder of the allotted time.

In her paper, “Between Nepantla and Natural Law: How Definitions of Rationality Impact the Ethics of Interreligious Engagement,” Molly Greening addressed the question, “Who gets perceived as a moral agent capable of making ethical claims amongst religious, sexual, and gendered differences?” Spanish Dominican Friar Francisco de Vitoria (1539) used the natural law to argue for the humanity and land rights of Indigenous people while denying that non-Catholic sexual or religious practices could be justified reasons for waging war. However, Greening argued that the supposed rationality of Christian conversion within Vitoria’s natural law framework created less of a dialogue with actual stakeholders and more of an ethical monologue amongst scholastic European clerics, leading to definitions of humanness based on the universalization of very particular European notions of land ownership and gender hierarchy. Queer Chicana feminist author Gloria Anzaldúa (1942-2004) redefined rationality as *conocimiento*. Anzaldúa claimed that being in *nepantla*, or the in-betweenness of the physical, sexual, psychological, and/or spiritual borderlands, developed certain sensitivities and ways of knowing necessary for healing the wounds of colonial violence. Greening argued that Anzaldúa’s concept of *nepantla* can be ethically theorized as a moral space of critical reflection that is more dialogical, privileging process and participation while taking experiences of concrete suffering as a normative starting point rather than needing an objective ontological criterion as a prerequisite for engagement.

In his paper, “A Confucian Contribution to the Catholic Just War Tradition,” David Kwon provided an examination of just war theory in Western Catholicism, which reveals a shortcoming, a shortcoming that can be resolved by an examination of Confucian just war theory. His paper posited that traditional just war theory’s stipulation of legitimate authority is weak both in terms of *jus ad bellum* and *jus post bellum*. Instead of the legitimate authority only being so because of legislative processes, they should also possess qualities fitting of a rulership position. To show this, Kwon first examined Confucian positions on *ren xing* (human nature) and the role it plays in the cultivation of the persons in the office. Kwon then incorporated these views into the *jus ad bellum* cause of legitimacy and extended them to the *jus post bellum* discourse. Finally, Kwon shared examples of the Confucian virtues to defend this new formulation that not only should the persons be legitimately eligible, but they should also exemplify certain moral qualities if they are to lead appropriately.

The discussion that followed prompted both presenters to move beyond their points. First, both panelists conversed for a few moments with one another about the

genesis of their respective projects. Tobias Winright remarked that both papers did an admirable job of pursuing the comparative nature of the just war tradition, considering that it has been “so tethered to the Roman Catholic tradition.” Both panelists responded to this with other examples of how the tradition could be further expanded. Other questions dealt with the moderation of Confucianism, the role of *jus post bellum* in Confucianism, and the other elements of the just war tradition. In particular, one questioner asked about the relationship between the criteria already discussed and right intention and the possibility of creating a just peace. Finally, the session concluded with a very interesting discussion on whether or not war could be considered justified today. No unanimous verdict was reached!

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