

MORAL THEOLOGY (I) TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Contemporary Developments in Virtue Ethics
Convener: David Cloutier, Mount St. Mary's University
Moderator: Nancy Rourke, Canisius College
Presenters: Daniel J. Daly, Saint Anselm College
William C. Mattison III, Catholic University of America

In "Globalization and the Structures of Virtue and Vice," Daniel Daly proposed that globalization is a morally relevant reality because, in theological terms, it drives distant persons into relationship with each other. These relationships are mediated at the global level through social, economic, and political structures. As a consequence, Catholic ethics needs new concepts to account for and morally scrutinize such relationships. Drawing on the Catholic moral tradition, Daly defined and proposed the concepts of structures of virtue and vice as means of capturing the moral quality of structures and institutions. Virtuous structures consistently promote the integral human good, human happiness, and the global common good. Vicious structures undermine the integral human good, produce unhappiness, and thwart the creation of the global common good.

The ensuing discussion included the following: Is "relationship" the correct term to use when referring to interactions among people in the global north and south? The notion that one is in relationship with the person who sews one's clothes in Bangladesh seems to stretch the meaning of word "relationship." A number of participants suggested that the author investigate other resources: philosophical business ethics; the notion of a corporate conscience; public health ethics, especially that of Jonathan Mann; human rights discourse; and international law. Finally, a discussion of the nature of one's obligations to those in the global south helped to clarify the notion that individuals can rightly practice a "preferential option for the proximate" (i.e., family, friends, and local community members), but that structures and institutions should embody and codify a preferential option for the poor.

In "Movements and Venues of Love: Reading *Deus caritas est* through distinct traditions on love," William Mattison III began with *Deus caritas est*, in which Pope Benedict XVI investigates the nature of love principally through an examination of *eros* and *agape* as different terms for love. At one point Benedict mentions that his encyclical is in part a correction of a tendency in philosophy and theology to dichotomize *eros* and *agape*. Prompted by this remark, Mattison's paper was originally intended to help further buttress the Pope's argument through attention to that background scholarship. It was assumed that Benedict had in mind twentieth century Lutheran pastor Anders Nygren, and his enormously influential *Agape and Eros*, which argued that the essentially self-seeking *eros* is antithetical to the essentially giving *agape*. Mattison's goal had been to summarize that argument, and explain how attention to Thomas Aquinas' distinction between *amor concupiscentiae* and *amor amicitiae* could support Pope Benedict's analysis against Nygren.

Research revealed, however, that while Nygren is indeed an important interlocutor and thus this turn to Thomas is helpful, there is also other twentieth century scholarship (e.g. de Rougemont) on *agape* and *eros* concerned mainly with *eros* as passionate indeterminate desire and *agape* as settled married love. Despite finding some similarities between these two bodies of literature (e.g., same names for terms, view of Christian *agape* as exclusive of *eros*), Mattison argued that, while the distinctions are importantly different, it is essential not to confuse or

conflate these distinctions. Finally he turned to *Deus caritas est* to argue that Benedict does treat issues raised by both uses of the distinction yet distinguishes both uses. Mattison concludes with analysis of the ramifications of failure to so distinguish these uses either in one's reading of the encyclical or more generally.

After the paper, discussion proved particularly fruitful in three ways. First, certain questions demanded that the significance of this potentially obtuse topic be more immediately evident. Second, new resources for examining *agape* and *eros* were suggested, including the thought of St. Francis de Sales. Finally, questions were raised exploring the relevance of this paper for same sex relationships and marriage.

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