

MORAL THEOLOGY (I)—TOPIC SESSION

Topic: Moral Theology and the *Sensus Fidelium*  
Convener: Ramón Luzárraga, Benedictine University at Mesa  
Moderator: Stephen Pope, Boston College  
Presenters: Julia Hanlon Rubio, Saint Louis University  
John Berkman, Regis College (Toronto)  
Andrew Kuzma, Marquette University

The Moral Theology Topic Session attracted a final total twenty attendees overall, with ten attendees per session. Rubio and Berkman opened the first session on the topic of “Cooperation with Wrongdoing and Scandal in Light of the *Sensus Fidelium*.” Their papers called for consideration of a new paradigm for the principles of cooperation with evil and the causing of scandal, drawing on the *sensus fidelium* in two ways: first, the fact that the faithful often have a deep sense of responsibility for evil to which they contribute even when official Church teaching absolves them of wrongdoing, and vice versa; and second, the question of whether the tradition on cooperation, if true to the *sensus fidelium*, must refocus on the interrelationship between the witness of Scripture as appropriated by the saints, an ongoing moral tradition of thought, and its reception by the faithful.

Kuzma’s paper, “Balthasarian Moral Formation: Applying Beauty to the Treatment of Non-human Animals,” sketched a theo-dramatic ethics that applied beauty to moral formation. It began with the morality implicit in Balthasar’s theology. This morality was illustrated by considering the way a theological aesthetics-dramatics can form a vision and treatment of non-human animals. He concluded by suggesting that Christians formed in this manner would recognize the modern practice of factory farming to be inherently sinful.

Discussion in the first session found many participants convinced that the *sensus fidei* of ordinary lay people concerning cooperation with evil as applied to social issues has been ahead of the Magisterium. They think that many lay people indeed “feel” implicated on issues like voting, sweatshop clothes, factory-farmed meat, taxes, etc. even when official Church teaching authority is not asking them to. People seemed interested in Rubio and Berkman’s project of retrieving cooperation, though there were many questions about if or how the manual framework could be adapted for contemporary issues involving cooperation with evil and cooperation with good. With Kuzma, people discussed the retrieval of Balthasar for an explicitly Christian ethics. They questioned, moreover, whether beauty would enable people to reach the moral conclusion on factory farming Kuzma thinks they would.

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