required *to judge* a human act by a moral absolute: (1) the act must involve a teleological order of reason that is always associated with it, and (2) the material must relate per se to this order. But the first criterion is vague, for a property, cause, and accident are all "associated" with a substance in different ways. Additionally, the reader may wonder how Jensen's account of moral absolutes is different from the view he condemned earlier which claims that "teleology provides a kind of inherent nature to the physical act" (277).

In the course of Jensen's work, the reader will have received a thorough analysis of the major positions and issues discussed by contemporary Thomistic ethicists and moral theologians regarding human action. Despite Jensen's warning that his book is a dialectical work, one might get lost amid the arguments for and against various positions, or tire of his revisiting certain examples many times. This indicates that the book is principally ordered neither by the issues discussed nor by the positions of physicalism, Abelardianism, or proportionalism. Rather, it is organized dialectically, flowing more like a dialogue than a strict treatise. To help the reader through the maze, Jensen summarizes at the end of each chapter and each major subdivision within a chapter what the discussion has covered, often posing a question to indicate where it will go next. This results in a series of well-argued stands on moral issues, but not a complete synthetic account of the human moral act.

Because of his wide-ranging approach to moral issues, and his negative assessment of many different authors, at least some of Jensen's claims can (and probably will) be criticized by his interlocutors. For example, an undercurrent throughout his book is a constant critique of the thought of Steven Long and "physicalism." One could respond that, while some of Jensen's textual readings of Aquinas are plausible, he overlooks the Aristotelian foundations of Aquinas's ethical thought. Aristotle's ethics are closely tied to his philosophical biology and anthropology, which means that his understanding of human action is closely tied to his understanding of human nature as that of a rational animal. Aquinas closely follows the Philosopher in this respect. Jensen's argument about the stability and teleology of man's natural inclinations, helpful as it is in many respects, could benefit from such a perspective.

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A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences

by James F. Keenan, SJ

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256 pages, bibliographic notes and index, ISBN 978-0-8264-2929-2

Let me begin with the title. James Keenan's new book is incorrectly titled *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century*: *From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*. Really it is a bibliographical essay almost entirely about revisionist moral theology in the twentieth century. On the positive side, it is indeed an impressive history. Keenan has read every book, article, and online offering on his subject. This unfortunately has made the book very thin on commentary, useful mainly for its copious footnotes (1,147 of them, 127 per chapter, a quarter of the book) and abundant mentions of fellow revisionists. Keenan's associates will be pleased because they are all mentioned—and I mean all. Keenan is clearly preaching to his revisionist choir. The overall result is a selective and sketchy book, with a few somewhat interesting biographical sections, especially those on Josef Fuchs and Bernhard Häring. Now that they are dead,

and the Theology of the Body, virtue ethics, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and *Veritatis splendor* have occupied the field, this book constitutes an unintentional send-off, as it were, for a movement that has sputtered and all but expired.

Overall the book aims to deal with, in Keenan's prolix prose, "the manuals through revisionist innovation and subsequent division to finally more reconciling agendas fixed on the local and the global concerns of theological ethics" (1). Additionally, Keenan intends to introduce us "not only to the works that shaped the century but more importantly the persons" (vii). By way of background, he begins with the penitential manuals and the *Summa theologiae* from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, then goes on to the casuistry of the sixteenth century and the moral manuals from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Although he mentions scholasticism and the *Summa theologiae*, Keenan reduces the focus of the medieval moral theology to the penitential manuals and sinful actions, whereas the historian John Bossy has pointed out that most medieval people confessed according to the seven deadly sins, which are the dispositions behind sinful actions. Morton Bloomfield's list of works on the virtues and vices, titled *Incipits of Latin works on the virtues and vices, 1100–1500*, runs to over seven hundred pages. Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* are organized around the seven deadly vices, only subordinately dealing with specific sins. Aquinas's *Summa*, which presumably Keenan has read, employs the same organization. Paintings and statues in medieval cathedrals depict the seven vices and the seven virtues, not sinful actions. So much for an accurate version of the past, but on this perhaps we can give Keenan a pass, since he is dealing mainly with the twentieth century.

Primarily then, Keenan deals selectively with the moral manualists of the twentieth century, specifically Thomas Slater, Henry Davis, and Heribert Jone. He moves on to the historian Odo Lottin, to the alleged "retrieval" of Scripture by Fritz Tillmann and of charity by Gerard Gilleman, and to the "synthesis" of Bernhard Häring. Next he discusses the "neo-manualists" John Ford and Gerald Kelly, and confronts *Humanae vitae* and *Veritatis splendor*. Finally there are chapters on three "new foundations" in moral reasoning, theological anthropology, and global discourse on suffering and solidarity, with a two-page appendix on the encyclicals of Pope Benedict XVI. A much more perceptive and accurate history can be found in Servais Pinckaers' one-hundred-thirty-page survey in *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (1995).

All this is done with an astonishing lack of historical discernment and balance. The two final chapters should have dealt with the two most significant developments in the 1980s: John Paul II's hugely popular Theology of the Body (never even mentioned) and the return to Thomistic virtue ethics, now enshrined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. But Keenan largely ignores Servais Pinckaers and Alasdair MacIntyre, the two major figures who have effected that return to virtue ethics in the Church and in secular universities. Other important figures like Germain Grisez, John Finnis, and Janet Smith are also given short shrift. They receive three mentions in the text. By contrast, Josef Fuchs, Bernard Häring, Klaus Demmer, Charles Curran, and Richard McCormick are extolled and receive extended attention and some sixty-four mentions. Documents of the magisterium such as *Humanae vitae* and *Veritatis splendor* receive some eleven pages larded with revisionist commentary. *Evangelium vitae* and *Donum vitae* are dealt with briefly or superficially (two mentions). This represents, of course, what the revisionist theologians call dialogue.

As for the subtitle, *From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*, well, that trajectory is reductive at one end and flatulent at the other. "Confessing sins" reduces medieval tradition to the penitential manuals, as we have seen, and one wonders what is meant by "liberating consciences." Indeed, the continual stress on conscience itself, with the subjective intention of the agent, would seem to align Keenan with the manualist tradition he so abhors. Following his mentor Fuchs, Keenan seems to conclude that the person finds "moral truth through the discernment

of an informed conscience confronting reality" (121). But crucial questions immediately come to mind. Consciences informed by whom or what? The person himself? Keenan and his ilk? The papacy? Bishops? Priests in the confessional? Smart money would bet on the imperial self, free to determine good and evil for itself. Thus, says Keenan in agreement with Alfons Auer, "Faith provides to the autonomous Christian the communal context, the motivation, and the last end, but not any specific teachings from Scripture, the tradition, or the contemporary magisterium" (179). By contrast, the realism of John Ford's emphasis on communal conformity with the teaching of the Church and John Paul II's call for conscience to be rooted in truth clearly trump the isolation and vagueness of "the autonomy of the individual conscience."

The central problem with the book, with most if not all of the mentioned revisionists, is the liberal ethos that determines their outlook, their language, their conception of history and—dare we use the word?—their principles. Now that Enlightenment bashing is fashionable, it's rather touching to find such a sentimental attachment to the myth of progress (medieval bad, modern good), the autonomous individual, optimism about human nature, the turn to the subject, the obsession with innovation and the new (change is good and the status quo is bad), the animus against authority (theologians are wise, the hierarchy thickheaded), and the constant use of open-ended terms like freedom, experience, and development. Freedom for what? Whose experience? Development toward what? These are questions that remain unanswered. I once attended a dying seventy-year-old woman who said, "I shoulda had more kids," implying that she had limited the number. At what point do we consider her experience, in youth or in old age looking back? Do we take into account a celibate like Josef Fuchs who in 1968 had "a seminal experience … listening to others … [whose] understanding of the various claims on them was more comprehensive and more adequate than the general teachings of Rome" (120–121). Who were the "others"? We don't know. How is it that single individuals or couples are more comprehensive and more adequate than Rome and Catholic tradition? What about the "experience" of those who practice and praise NFP? And so on.

As for the issues basic to the book, there is nothing new in this toyshop of liberal ideas, just a weak grasp of the actual plastered over with platitudes and bromides. "Know what you should know; decide rightly; act responsibly" (151). Furthermore, we have Josef Fuchs and friends in denial about intrinsically evil acts, a notion crushed in n. 80 of *Veritatis splendor* (quoting *Gaudium et Spes* n. 27) with its list of such brutal acts. Summarizing Fuchs, Keenan says, "We do not have the omniscience to anticipate all the circumstances and intentions that might accompany the object of an act." In the words of Great Mentor Fuchs himself, "A priori, such knowledge is not attainable" (153). Imagine Fuchs addressing an audience of Jews or African Americans and explaining that we can't know ahead of time that genocide or racism is morally wrong. Yes, the object of these two acts might be evil, but we can't know that ahead of time. Under certain circumstances, who knows, they might be permissible.

So also with natural law. Klaus Demmer assures us that "historical thinking shattered the assumption that the human person had an essential nature which was the same, untouched by the passage of time" (174). He adds that "the totality of human nature in its whole richness, with its potential and capacities which are yet to be awakened, can be grasped only in history, not by an aprioristic affirmation about its essence." Ah yes! "Totality … potential and capacities yet to be awakened … grasped only in history!" As Charles Péguy said, "The Germans love confusion, that is what they call depth." In any case, law, natural or otherwise, seems always to be construed as an imposition on the individual conscience, as something authority compels the individual to follow, never as a directive in harmony with human nature, leading to human flourishing, defining good and evil. The liberal theologians are all for "forging consensus" and "offering guidelines" but against "compelling" with "prohibitive norms."

And so it goes. After two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Gulag, and assorted atrocities, with the illegitimacy rate at 30 percent–plus since 1960, with STDs, divorce, abortions, the hook-up culture, young men unwilling to commit—all the fallout predicted in *Humanae vitae*—one would think that theologians would not be enamored with the new, with a naive trust in the imperial self's desire and capacity to carefully discern, with the brave new world of modernity. As Samuel Johnson once said, some things are too important to be new.

But the really interesting question is, What is the sensibility behind this revisionism? What fuels it, drives it, generates it? Certainly the trigger point was *Humane vitae*, which unleashed a torrent of sympathy for the laity concerned about contraception, divorce, abortion, and homosexuality. However, as Max Scheler indicated in *Ressentiment*, this sympathy for the conflicted experience of the laity masks a revolutionary protest:

> The pathos of modern humanitarianism, its clamor for greater sensuous happiness, its subterraneously smoldering passion, its revolutionary protest against all institutions, traditions, and customs which it considers as obstacles to the increase of sensuous happiness … above all this love of mankind is the expression of a repressed rejection, of a counter-impulse against God. It is the disguised form of a repressed hatred of God. Man is loved because his pain, his ills and sufferings in themselves form a gladly accepted objection against God's "wise and benevolent rule."[1]

A bit harsh perhaps, but basically on target. Behind the facade of "moral reasoning" is the autonomous individual, the imperial self, and the will to control, to enjoy, to be free of all influence, to decide for oneself, to choose among the supposed infinite possibilities of life. As Hannah Arendt put it, everything is possible and nothing is true. The world is a field of pleasures to be enjoyed, over against the world as a spiritual crucible where one has to choose good and avoid evil, endure difficulties, put up with problems, and carry the Cross.

One is left with the clear realization, finally, that this book is a one-sided, breezy, selective history of twentieth-century moral theology, strikingly uncritical and behind the times. No one reads Fuchs any more, no one reads Häring, no one reads Curran, and shortly no one will read Keenan and friends. True, they have their academic chairs, their awards, and their honorary degrees. But in the last two decades of the millennium, the renewal of moral theology came with virtue ethics and the theology of the body, not with the revisionists. Ask not for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for them.

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[1] Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. Lewis Coser and William Holdheim (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), 93, 98.

Virtue Epistemology: Motivation and Knowledge

by Stephen Napier

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Linda Zagzebski's *Virtues of the Mind* sought to bring normative epistemology more in line with empirical discoveries in cognitive psychology. Stephen Napier's *Virtue Epistemology*, written twelve years later, continues that same project. Both understand human knowledge as an achievement of the virtuous inquirer, of the agent who acts, and this leads