Thursday, July 25, 2019
Concurrent Session 2 | 3-4:30 p.m.

HESBURGH ROOM

“Well-Being, Narrative Value, and Virtue Ethics” (Nicholas Smith, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY)

I argue in favor of a virtue-ethical account of well-being. According to this account (as characterized by Christine Swanton), acts and events contribute to a subject’s well-being only if they—or the subject’s ‘handling’ of them—are in accordance with virtue.

My argument is that virtue ethics is better equipped to meet three constraints on a satisfactory theory of well-being than its rivals: hedonism, desire-satisfaction theory, and (standard) objective list theory.

The first such constraint (which is also the central focus of the paper) is *adequacy in respect to narrative value*: a theory of well-being should capture acts and events that are (dis)valuable at least partly in virtue of their narrative meaning.

To clarify this constraint, I engage with the literature on the ‘shape of a life’ and, following Velleman and Kauppinen, argue that changes in the (dis)value of events and acts that are targeted by this literature are due to changes in narrative meaning rather than temporal location or order.

The narrative meaning of acts and events undergirds the distinction between, for example, deserved vs. undeserved rewards and learning from one’s mistakes vs. learning a lesson unrelated to one’s prior mistakes. MacIntyre highlights the pervasiveness of narrative meaning in claiming that “[a]n action is a moment in a possible or actual history or in a number of such histories” (*After Virtue*, 214).

I argue that virtue ethics is more adequate in respect to narrative value than its rivals, with emphasis on Kauppinen’s ‘narrative calculus’, which claims that narrative value is constituted by success in pursuit of worthwhile goals, when such success is deserved on account of the agent’s intelligent exercise of human capacities. Kauppinen’s narrative calculus, unlike virtue ethics, fails to fully capture the disvalue of dishonorable victories and the value of honorable failures.

The second constraint is *adequacy in respect to practical reason*. Since an agent always has at least some reason to pursue her good, an account of well-being is fully satisfactory only if it limits good-making features of an action for the agent to features that provide the agent with a (defeasible) reason to perform that act.

The third constraint is *adequacy in respect to emotional fittingness*. Since an agent only has reason to feel good about her life in response to its good-making features, an account of wellbeing should limit good-making features of a life to those which make positive emotions, such as pride, fitting.

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Nicholas Ryan Smith is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Academic Literacy and Linguistics at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (City University of New York). He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Auckland (New Zealand). Smith's research falls primarily in moral philosophy, especially virtue ethics. His work has appeared in the Australasian Journal of Philosophy *and the* Journal of Value Inquiry.

"Dependent, Rational, Faulty Animals" (Ashton Trumble, University of Dallas)

In Dependent Rational Animals, Alasdair MacIntyre rightly addresses vulnerability, affliction, and dependence as central human conditions. He writes: "Dependence on others is… often recognized in a general way… [but] an acknowledgment of anything like the full extent of that dependence and of the ways in which it stems from our vulnerability and our afflictions is generally absent" (2-3). What MacIntyre does not discuss at great length is human *fault*, or the tendency to make mistakes. This opens up a gap in MacIntyre's account, and I intend to fill it by answering the question: What role does human fault play in our attainment of the virtues?

It will be a central thesis of this paper that nearly every act of fault holds the potency for virtuous activity. Whether or not we choose to actualize this potency determines whether or not our fault remains defective or is redeemed. To illustrate this, I will call on MacIntyre's analogy in *After Virtue* in which he describes a child playing chess in the hopes of earning a prize. If the child cheats, he gains the external good of the prize but cheats himself of those goods which are internal to the practice of chess (188-190).

What is largely ignored in this scene is the importance of the child's original mistake. Regardless of whether the child chooses to cheat or whether he chooses to concede defeat, he has committed some sort of strategic error resulting in his poor position in the game. How the child proceeds from this initial mistake determines whether or not the child develops the virtue of humility. In this way, the original act of fault holds the potential to be actualized virtuously. Likewise, if the child chooses to cheat, he remains within the potency of his initial fault.

It was the decisions we make in light of our mistakes—the decisions of whether to actualize the potency of our faults—which determine the availability of the virtues to each of us. Just as MacIntyre argues that the importance of our dependence on others has been largely underestimated, I will argue that the role of human error within the context of the virtues has been similarly underestimated.

Ashton Trumble is earning her Master of Arts in Philosophy at the University of Dallas. Previously, she worked under Dr. Thomas Lindsay at the Texas Public Policy Foundation. Her interests include political philosophy and Platonic epistemology. She enjoys watching horror movies with her dachshund.

Thursday, July 25, 2019
Concurrent Session 2 | 3-4:30 p.m.

"In Search of Alternative Paths toward Coherent Narratives of Collective Solidarity" (Ionut Untea, Southeast University, Nanjing)

Institutionalized communities worldwide are in crisis: American nation deeply polarized; Catholic Church affected by the uncovering of sexual abuses; Brexit and the EU. The members of such institutionalized communities mistrust more and more what appears to be the inconsistent narratives sustained by institutional practices that favor the elites. In the atmosphere of blunt populism worldwide, people are in search for viable alternatives that the liberal nation-states have failed to offer through their institutional frameworks. Hauerwas, a longtime critic of the liberal project, drawing partly on MacIntyre's views on the actual alternatives that should be debated in a liberal democracy, has proposed the Church as the "alternative political community". This view has faced criticism precisely because it does not take enough into account the Church's historical failures to tackle institutional injustice and oppression. New discourses are on the rise, such as that of the "illiberal" democracy upholding the need of strong leadership, at the expense of the separation of powers, but with the assurance of economical wellbeing of the lower classes. The metaphor of a "parallel state" (i.e. the current institutions that do not represent the people's needs) has been present in discourses of Erdogan's Turkey, Putin's Russia, Orban's Hungary, in Poland, or Romania and present affinities with that of Trump. These leaders aim at generating a narrative of a collective solidarity of majorities around a strong antihero leader. This metaphor of a leader accomplishing the goals set up by the people more effectively than by institutional means, even though sometimes with dirty hands, suits better the current practices of online unmediated communication and information. These discourses are appealing to what can be called an "untamed" feature of the human political character that liberal politics has ignored, and which makes people feel awe for individuals that do not play by the rules. There is a need of alternative ways of collective practices that would challenge the "fake images" that communities make of themselves (Ricoeur). Since, in the current context, majorities feel more and more that they've spent the past half of century thinking only at others (minorities) and that it is time to think of themselves, Ricoeur's and MacIntyre's insights on narratives and collective practices will help me argue that the current fascination for antiheroes may be redirected toward the appreciation of heroic figures and moral institutions that would consolidate a narrative not only of a social "co-existence" but rather toward the collective *telos* of an existence "for" each other.

Ionut Untea is associate research professor in the department of philosophy of Southeast University, Nanjing, China, since September 2016. He has previously taught at the University of La Rochelle, France, and was a postdoctoral fellow of the Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue (FIIRD) at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. He obtained his doctorate in 2013 at Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE), Paris. He focuses on the intersections between ethics, aesthetics, religion, and political thought in modern and contemporary times. He has published in Politics and Religion, Monist, Heythrop Journal, *and* Studies in Religion*, etc.*

Thursday, July 25, 2019
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JOYCE ROOM

"Might Self-Cultivation Be a Virtue?" (Rebecca Stangl, University of Virginia)

Both Christine Swanton and I have suggested that there is something like a virtue of self-cultivation. While this claim is not completely without precedent, it is nonetheless a radical departure from traditional virtue ethics. Traditional virtue ethics has much to say about the development of virtue, but the picture one gets in Aristotle, for example, is that one developing in virtue is in some other state – continence, say – and will eventually arrive at virtue itself. The idea that the process of self-cultivation itself might be virtuous, and someone with such a disposition might thereby possess a virtue, is quite different. But this quite different, and radical, claim is, I think, correct.

Nonetheless, it raises important questions about the nature of virtue, moral ideals, and how they fit together. Christine Swanton hints at this when she notes, but does not explain, that a virtue of self-improvement is "seemingly paradoxical". In this paper, I take on this explanatory task. That is, I will aim both to show as clearly as possible why it might seem paradoxical, or even impossible, to recognize a virtue concerned with self-improvement and to argue that, nonetheless, this seeming is a mere seeming. There can be, after all, a virtue of self-cultivation.

Rebecca Stangl is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Virginia. She specializes in contemporary ethical theory, and her recent work has appeared in such leading journals as Ethics*,* Philosophical Quarterly*, and* The Hastings Center Report*, as well as several edited collections from Oxford University Press. She is currently finishing work on a manuscript entitled* Neither Heroes Nor Saints: Ordinary Virtue, Extraordinary Virtue, and Self-Cultivation.

CARMICHAEL ROOM

"Prayer Book Perfectionism" (James Dominic Rooney, Saint Louis University)

A shared vision of the meaning of life is part of the good we share by living together in a community, and without communities we will fail to flourish. Lacking a shared public outlook on the 'meaning of life', our modern liberal states are not communities, as many have argued (including proponents of the liberal state).

The problem for the perfectionist is straightforward: how to reconcile the legitimacy of the state promoting one vision of the meaning of life in such a way that the state still allows substantial freedom to its citizens in refusing or accepting the state's proffered vision. The perfectionist pluralist position seems unstable, potentially drifting back into the same liberal toleration it criticizes.

There are two insights that make the perfectionist pluralist position both more appealing and consistent. The first is that the perfectionist pluralist should hold that freedom in accepting meaning in life is part of the good life – freedom is a final, not instrumental, good. Presumably, then, state coercion in favor of its vision of the good life should be publicly justified.

The second is that practices, like institutions, can be accepted for different reasons. Kevin Vallier argues that citizens diverging in comprehensive vision can nevertheless find a shared set of institutions justifiable for their own particular reasons. These justificatory reasons are justificatory because they are intelligible to others in the community who, while not sharing the same vision, can understand that these reasons are justificatory for their neighbors.

I will propose that the perfectionist pluralist, in light of these considerations, can offer a compelling way for states to promote a unified vision among citizens: endorsing a unified set of classical ritual practices. Appealing to recent work on Christian liturgy and Confucian ritual, authors reflect that rituals, as involving symbolic action, are susceptible of different interpretations without logical conflict, as a poem might involve different layers of meaning. Further, rituals build a sense of shared meaning because they involve people in communal practices and commitments. Finally, meaningful ritual need not occur only in religious settings, as the Confucian tradition illustrates. If citizens in a modern liberal state can converge on some such classical ritual practices because their ritual practices are communally intelligible, the state is justified in promoting them and so promoting a shared vision of the meaning of life in that state.

Fr. James Dominic Rooney, OP, is currently a PhD student in Philosophy at Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO. He has degrees in philosophy (MA, University of Toledo) and theology (MA/MDiv., Aquinas Institute of Theology). His areas of specialization are: Metaphysics, Medieval Philosophy (Aquinas), and Chinese Philosophy (Confucianism). He is currently writing a dissertation on the metaphysics of material composition, critiquing contemporary positions in light of Latin and Chinese hylomorphism (director: Dr. Eleonore Stump). He has published numerous articles, and has presented at the APA, ACPA, SCP, and Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy.

“Political Justification, the Modern State, and MacIntyre’s Conception of the Common Good” (Benjamin Rusch, Baylor University)

To what end are political communities ordered? One might naturally answer, “The common good.” But if one is skeptical that the modern liberal state can be properly said to have a common good, is there a legitimate end for which such a state is exists? Can its authority be justified? I argue that the modern state could be justified, but in a secondary way, if it is ordered towards the common good of the communities which comprise it. I then briefly sketch how the relationship between the modern state and more local forms of political community might look on this picture, adopting a quasi-liberal framework which locates rights in communities rather than individuals *per se*.

As a way into these questions, I examine a certain ambivalence found in the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre toward the modern state. At times he comes across as one of the harshest critics of the modern liberal state, while at other times he softens this criticism by speaking of important goods provided by such states. To make sense of this, I examine what I take to be MacIntyre's account of the common good, which amounts to the good of being a member of a certain kind of political community. This involves participation in the practice of politics, which requires a joint searching for how to order communal life. Political authority in a community is evidently justified to the extent it is ordered towards the community's common good. But, I argue that states of a certain scale cannot have a common good so understood. Thus, the problem arises, "Can their authority be justified?"

I argue that, consonant with MacIntyre's thought, the authority of something like the modern state can be given a secondary justification via the common goods of the communities which comprise it. The activities of such a state, like building roads or caring for the common defense, are justified so long as they are ordered towards promoting the common goods of more local communities. I speculate that one possible way to model this relationship is to appropriate a liberal framework in the following way: Rather than locate freedom, equality, and rights to human individuals who inhabit a liberal state, perhaps we can think of similar rights as attaching to the local community instead. These communities might then freely pursue their common good, aided but not coerced by larger governmental entities.

Benjamin Rusch is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Philosophy at Baylor University. His research interests are primarily in Aristotelian-Thomist approaches to ethics and their applications in political philosophy. Prior to attending Baylor, Benjamin studied at the University of Notre Dame, where he earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and theology and at Boston College, where he earned a master's degree in philosophy. He also has experience teaching theology at the high school level.

"Virtuosity: A Virtue Politics for Liberal Democracy" (Ruby Shao, University of Oxford)

Liberalism undermines the virtue needed to sustain any liberal democracy. Meanwhile, virtue ethics lacks a counterpart in political theory, virtue politics. To solve the pair of challenges, I propose a liberal form of virtue politics, *virtuosity*: the view that to preserve a liberal democracy, each citizen has a duty to promote opportunities to become virtuous, according to his or her account of the virtues, through civil society and the government. Chapter 1 defines liberalism, democracy, and virtue as understood by virtue ethics. Chapter 2 draws on virtue ethics, including its analogy between health and flourishing, to introduce virtue politics. Chapter 3 explains how liberalism impairs the virtue that it requires by tending toward individualism, which the social nature of virtue politics would alleviate. A review of the history of liberalism and virtue reveals that nobody else, to my knowledge, has fashioned a liberal form of virtue politics. Supplying the first liberal form of virtue politics, Chapter 4 advances virtuosity. Although the virtues make their possessors flourish, the flourishing of citizens forms no part of how I justify virtuosity. Instead, my argument instrumentalizes the virtues for the purpose of keeping a liberal democracy functioning. Harnessing each citizen's account of the virtues, a subjective matter, emerges as the most effective liberal means of approximating the virtues needed to maintain his or her liberal democracy, an objective matter. The governmental aspect of virtuosity proves neither perfectionist in the usual sense nor republican. Chapter 5 examines the practical upshot of virtuosity.

Ruby Shao is a master's candidate for the BPhil in Philosophy at the University of Oxford. Her work explores moral, legal, and political philosophy through ancient and medieval lenses. She is also a Communications Specialist for the Princeton University Humanities Council. Previously, she earned her bachelor's in Philosophy from Princeton University. She served as a News Editor and Senior Writer of The Daily Princetonian*, an Editorial and Rights Intern at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and a residential adviser for the Witherspoon Institute as well as the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions.*

SALON C, SMITH BALLROOM

"Revolutionary Thomism: When Marxian Theology Meets Aquinas in the Marketplace" (Brian Boyd, University of Notre Dame)

Whose Thomism? Which revolution? Alastair McIntyre holds that traditions are defined by the set of questions about which they continue to argue (After Virtue, 222), and he has inspired the movement known as revolutionary Aristotelianism, bringing together Marxists and Christians in an ongoing argument about how to respond to modernity. This paper will focus on the debate among Roman Catholic Thomists concerning the moral status of the global market system. First, I will consider the Marx-inflected Thomism of Herbert McCabe O.P., showing the relation of his New Left views to liberation theology. Then, I will contrast this radical theological critique of our economic system with the qualified defense made by Mary Hirschfeld, who uses Thomistic natural law arguments to vindicate fundamental features of market economies. A fruitful argument—rather than a shouting match—between a radical critic of globalization and a qualified defender of capitalism is possible because each one is, more than anything else, a committed Thomistic Catholic. Both McCabe and Hirschfeld uphold Catholic Social Teaching; the problem lies in defining, for instance, what it means to live out a preferential option for the poor, and which policies will in fact most support their betterment.

Hirschfeld's natural law defense of the (properly-bounded) marketplace as the best means we have for the actualization of individual and societal potential will allow us to see why going fully with McCabe to socialism would in fact impede the integral liberation which both thinkers seek. Hirschfeld charitably hopes to engage in dialogue with secular economists and thence gradually to reform the system, and a brief comparison to the writings of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum illustrates this as plausible. Yet MacIntyre's reflections on the distortions which the compartmentalization of life in modern society entails will show why such hopes cannot be expected to translate into a transformation of the economic lives of plain persons. Moreover, MacIntyre's analysis of the tension between internal goods of practices and external goods of institutions explains why many of the ethical problems which Hirschfeld shows to be theoretically soluble will in practice remain intractable. I thus conclude with an agenda for the development of Thomistic reflection on the ethics of economics, alongside practical recommendations for Thomists who wish their economic activity to more closely adhere to the living tradition.

Brian Boyd graduated from Notre Dame in 2008 with a degree in philosophy and a minor in Philosophy in the Catholic Tradition, placing his studies under the oversight of Professor MacIntyre. After taking a second degree in philosophy and theology at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford, studying biomedical ethics with Edmund Pellegrino at Georgetown, and learning about character formation through service as a teacher and dean at a parochial school, he returned to Notre Dame in 2015 to study moral theology. He is now a doctoral student in moral theology directed by Jean Porter on Thomistic ethics, economics, and spirituality.

"A Common Ground in Nature: A Point of Contact between St. Thomas Aquinas and Karl Marx" (John Macias, St. Patrick's Seminary and University)

Thomists, and more generally those within the broadly Catholic intellectual tradition, have long been firmly hostile to, or at the very least deeply suspicious of, Karl Marx and Marxist thought. The default assumption is that Thomists and Marxists have little if any common ground. As a number of scholars have shown, however, there is a common heritage in St. Thomas Aquinas and Karl Marx, namely in Aristotle. Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, has emphasized the need for a dialogue between Marxists and Thomists on these grounds. Scott Meikle has also done some excellent work to reveal the Aristotelian background of Marx's thought. This common Aristotelian heritage, if it could be established, would allow for Thomists to see in Marx resources for considering how it is difficult to live according to the demands of the virtues in contemporary economic and social circumstances. In this paper, I will take the position of a Thomist writing to other Thomists and showing why they should take Marx seriously. I will argue that there is important evidence for a broadly Aristotelian point of contact between Marx and Aquinas in their mutual commitment to an understanding of what could be called "natures." "Nature", or what Aquinas calls "essence" and Marx "species-being," serves as common ground for future dialogue. It is well-known that Aquinas believes that individually existing things possess essences, and thus they have characteristic activities based on the kind of thing they are. It is less well-known, at least among Thomists, that Marx, in his early work, speaks of human beings as a "species-being," and notes important ways that human beings are unique in their proper activity. My argument will proceed first by briefly presenting Aquinas's views on natures, and, in particular, on human nature. Next, I will present Marx's views, largely found in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, on "species-being" and the unique human function.

John Macias is the Residence Life Scholar at University of Mary in Bismarck, ND. He serves as assistant professor of Philosophy and Catholic Studies. He completed a PhD in Philosophy from the Center for Thomistic Studies at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, TX. His interests are in Thomistic natural law and political philosophy. His doctoral dissertation offered an explanation and defense of the political philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre.

"Marx from the Perspective of 323 B.C., 1272 A.D., and 1789 A.D.: Is the Common Good the End of an Economy?" (Paul Radich, Catholic University of America)

To what degree are the economic and political presuppositions in Marx's early writings in accord with Thomistic Aristotelianism? This paper investigates what Marx might have learned from Aristotle, if he had been allowed to lecture on Aristotle at the University. It also looks at what Marx did not learn, through no fault of his own, from Thomas Aquinas's version of Aristotelianism. Rather than offering a full treatment of how the physics and metaphysics of Aristotle compare or contrast with those of Marx, and yet underpinned by such considerations, the paper compares Marx's early writings with Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*, and Thomas Aquinas's *Commentaries* on these two texts, augmented by Robert Sokolowski's metaphysical and phenomenological commentaries on Aristotle's works.

MacIntyre has unfolded a beautiful vision of the common good, which focuses on the moral virtues and the role of the human person as an *agent of good*. But in a Thomistic Aristotelian vision of the common good, what is the proper relationship between *phronesis* and the other intellectual virtues? MacIntyre's vision could be complemented and enriched by looking at the human person also as an *agent of truth*, in Sokolowski's Aristotelian approach, because human beings are fulfilled ultimately in the contemplation of truth, through *sophia*.

And why consider 1789? To focus on the impact of the U.S. Constitution's patent and copyright clause, on unleashing the creative potential of the human mind. No longer did a person need to own land or the capitalist means of production in order to create wealth: the human intellect could now be productive in a new way. How does this relate to Aristotle's notion of the intellectual virtue of *eutechne* in the realm of *poesis*? Given MacIntyre's fruitful critique of capitalism, is there an entrepreneurial form of economic activity that can foster the common good? In what way could MacIntyre's vision be complemented by considering the human person as an *agent of co-creation*, drawing from the work of Israel Kirzner and Michael Novak? Ultimately, within the context of moral virtue and intellectual virtue, can *eutechne* be perfective of the human person, and also serve the common good? In addition to being an agent of good and an agent of truth, can the human person also be an agent of co-creation, when she or he identifies authentic human needs, and then brings into being a new product or service to fulfill those authentic human needs?

Paul Radich is Assistant Professor of Practice in the Busch School of Business and Scholar Practitioner Fellow in the School of Philosophy at Catholic University of America, writing his dissertation on "Alasdair MacIntyre on the Common Good, and the Role of the Economy in the Common Good" (under Bradley Lewis; with Robert Sokolowski and Frederic Sautet). He was a Visiting Fellow at Cambridge University. He is a cross-disciplinary academic and practitioner who received his undergraduate degree from Notre Dame (Honors Physics-in-Medicine and Great Books), a philosophy Master's degree on Aquinas and Ockham, and has worked as a teacher of literature, Latin, and business, as well as a small-business practitioner for 20 years.