



COLLOQUIA

Thursday, November 11 | 1:30-2:45 p.m.

“By the Sweat of Your Brow Shall You Eat Your Bread”

“The Dignity of Peace: The Arts of Making and Healing”

Kevin Kambo, Hope College

Invocations of dignity are appeals to an intrinsic worth that is independent of instrumental value and are often made as part of arguments for protecting integrity against violence. The dignity of finite beings is derived from the goodness of a transcendent cause that orders the cosmos. As such, making peace (i.e., creating or restoring order) is an expression of human dignity and is at the same time a response to the dignity of the world. Two avenues for learning to recognize dignity, therefore, are arts of making and healing, since they require respecting worth beyond one's mind and will.

“Habitus and Habitat: Can We Reconcile Human and Environmental Nature?”

Rev. Samuel Bellafore, Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany

Today Christian thinkers and environmental activists are both emphasizing the importance of “nature,” but they do so apart from one another. Can we reconcile two parallel conversations about human and environmental nature? Human and environmental nature are two inflections of one wider created nature. Viewing nature writ large as a form of home (oikos), human persons can flourish at home in themselves and with their surroundings. This paper presents asceticism as one key remedy to our dual crises of nature and looks to one monastic example of an integrated human and environmental life.

“Tilling the Soil and Human Dignity”

Abe Schoener, Scholium Wines

I want to talk about the dignity of tilling the soil. There are two ways I want to look at this question: the first is from the perspective of modern, you might call it “post-modern,” agriculture. In this new paradigm, tilling is avoided, even deprecated. I will explore this specifically within my world of grape growing. The second path is through the Biblical genealogy of tilling: it is a necessity imposed on human beings as a consequence of the Fall. We will examine the early opposition between shepherding and farming, embodied in Cain and Abel, and then the specific place of the walled vineyard within this opposition. We will close with an analysis of the image of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:4, and an examination of the role of human work in this image.

“I Was in Prison and You Visited Me”

“Dignifying Incarceration: Implications for a Just Society”

Bryan Pilkington, Seton Hall University & Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine

Can practices of mass incarceration exist in a just society? I argue that the concept of dignity should play a leading role in moral analysis of this question and of incarceration, in general. After addressing objections to dignity serving this role, I motivate an account of dignity rooted in the uniqueness of human persons through an analysis of the literary work of English playwright and prison reform activist, John Galsworthy. Finally, I show how paying attention to those called by name has normative implications for current incarceration practices.

“Punishment and Pardon in Tocqueville and Beaumont's *On the Penitentiary System*”

Sarah Gustafson, Harvard University

Scholarship on Tocqueville has largely set aside his 1833 collaboration with Beaumont in *On the Penitentiary System*. There are compelling reasons to consider it, however, part of his oeuvre on human flourishing in democratic ages. This paper focuses on two parts of their argument about how former convicts return to the world either as free men or functionally prisoners to past "infamie" -- which one could call the Jean Valjean phenomenon. God's pardon of the conscience is necessary for self-esteem and inner freedom; simultaneously, social and legal forgiveness and reintegration into the community are also necessary conditions of human flourishing.

“Aquinas on Human Dignity and Contemporary Bioethics”

Jason Eberl, Saint Louis University

Thomists typically defend a concept of human dignity as fundamental to one's existence qua "human." Yet, Aquinas held a multivalent concept of dignity as fundamentally grounded in one's nature and a quality that could be lost, thereby justifying capital punishment. Contemporary Catholic social teaching, however, affirms that those guilty of capital crimes continue to possess intrinsic dignity. This paper offers an exegetical analysis of key passages to develop a coherent account of Aquinas's understanding of human dignity in comparison with post-Kantian views of human dignity. Conclusions are then drawn concerning various bioethical issues.

The Sacred and Profane

“A New and Doubtless Different St. Augustine: Rene Girard and Disenchanting the Secular”

James McFetridge Wilson, University of Cambridge

For more than a millennium, St. Augustine provided a foundational anthropology for Christian civilization. Though this classical Christian vision has all but lost its purchase on the modern imagination, the variety of emergent political, environmental, economic, and psychological crises that define our current moment attest to both the need and possibility of recovering some of Augustine’s lost anthropological insights.

Though often considered a novel and heterodox thinker by the mainstream theological academy, Catholic social theorist, Rene Girard, provides fresh language for recovering some of Augustine’s essential insights into the human situation. It is by recovering this Augustinian vision that Christians might move beyond the typically modern posture of defense and retreat, and reclaim a prophetic, diagnostic, and declamatory voice in the public square. The task that lies before Christians in the 21st century is not to re-enchant the secular world, but to continue in the Christian vocation of disenchanting the so-called secular of its idolatries and illusions.

“The Sacramentalization of the Civil Covenant & Christian Dignity at the Advent of Modernity”

Amy Chandran, Harvard University

Thomas Hobbes is often placed at the beginnings of a modern liberal trajectory that secularized the public sphere and relegated Christian conceptions of human dignity to mere private belief. But has this liberal transformation really eliminated these earlier conceptions from the public and political domain? Indeed, the attractiveness of modern secular tenets to subsequent generations suggests that fundamental Christian truths may not have been completely displaced but appropriated and coopted for other ends. This paper adapts a dissertation chapter which illuminates the influence of Catholic debates, occurring in Hobbes’s immediate environment, France, where he was while he composed *Leviathan*.

Dignity in the Workplace

“Nudging the Firm: Experimental Evidence on Employee Commitment, Peer Recognition and Cooperation”

David Echeverry, Universidad de Navarra

Human dignity generates two social markers: recognition, which can affirm the dignity of the individual, and prosocial behavior, which also stems from a sense of dignity. Since these channels are confounded by material incentives, we isolate the role of the latter. Our field experiment tests the effects of recognition on voluntary contributions to a public good at the onset of a behavioral intervention at a large Colombian corporation. Recognition has a sizable effect on contributions. The intervention improves the response to private recognition but, strikingly, it has an adverse distributional effect on the cooperative response to the group recognition.

“Integral Human Development & Best Practices in Church Management”

Pia de Solenni, Global Institute of Church Management

Transparency and accountability as management and business tools are a means of implementing Catholic social teaching, a means to implement the humanity of Jesus Christ in configuring the Church as his mystical body so as to promote evangelization: giving eternal life.

Through Every Human Heart: Dignity, Good, and Evil

“In the Eye of the Storm: Heinrich Maier, Priest and Spy”

Michelle Gress

Father Heinrich Maier, an Austrian Catholic Priest, ran one of the most effective spy rings in Austria during World War II, before being captured and ultimately executed by the Nazis. What does this devout Catholic priest's life and death tell us today about our particular vocation in time and place?

“The Failure to respect the Boundaries of Others and their Depersonalization in Dürrenmatt's *The Suspicion*”

Vera Profit, University of Notre Dame

In a secular society, human dignity can readily be identified in its absence. In his detective novel, *The Suspicion*, Dürrenmatt (1921 – 1990) tells of a Swiss physician, who epitomizes all eight characteristics of an evil individual. However, in this presentation, our focus remains on the two aspects, serving as the opposites of human dignity: the failure to respect the boundaries of others and their depersonalization. How Dr. Emmenberger mistreats Gulliver, Fortschig, the dwarf and Dr. Marlok, illustrate the core of these arguments. How she then terrorizes police inspector, Bärlach, will not go unnoticed. Victims frequently become victimizers. Evil abounds.

Dignity at the Speed of Light

“Privacy in Catholicism’s Deeper Sense of Human Dignity”

Rev. Matthew Schneider, L.C., Regina Apostolorum

Informational privacy is a big issue in recent decades in secular legal theory and ethical philosophy, but Catholic Theology has remained on the sideline. This paper will examine what parts of secular thought can be appropriated into Catholic theology and how Catholic theology can enter the wider discussion. We have a lot to offer from our extensive reflection on keeping secrets and the seal of the confession, along with broader topics of human dignity that can easily give a firmer foundation for privacy rights.

“Human Dignity and the Internet”

K.T. Brizek, de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture and the Thomistic Institute

This paper will conduct a Thomistic analysis of the scientific evidence of the effect of internet use on users to show that one can identify internet use as a serious obstacle to human flourishing and consequently a threat to the full expression of human dignity. The broader culture is incapable of offering a thoroughgoing critique of internet use because of its commitment to value-neutral choice. However, such a critique is possible within the Christian tradition, in particular in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, which understands human dignity to flow from the rational nature of the person.

“Toward a Computational Natural Law Defense of the Sanctity of Human Life”

Thomas Loughran, University of Notre Dame

An adequate defense of the sanctity of human life in the natural law tradition as upheld in Catholic Social Teaching requires an infusion of insight from the natural sciences and their integration in a new science of computational natural law. I defend this claim in three stages: by showing that the best current defense (in a tradition led by MacIntyre) is inadequate by its own standards; pointing the way to an additional level of justification—that of effective rhetoric—required and sufficient to produce an evidentiary signal; and sketching a design for an accelerator/detector system adequate for observing this signal.