

“Language, Teleology, and Life”

Saturday, November 12, 9:00-10:15 a.m. | Room 202 | Chair: Mary Hallan FioRito (de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture)

“The Grammar of the Created World: Real and Rational”

Margaret Monahan Hogan, (University of Portland)

The contemporary pro-abortion movement, from its inception in the latter half of the twentieth century to the dissent in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, has consistently ignored both the grammar of its claims and the reality of the object of abortion. This paper will present (I) an account of the disappearance of reality of the developing human being; (II) an account of the reality – the metaphysics and ontology – of the pregnant woman and her child; and (III) a delineation of the way forward as (a) principled, (b) legal, and (c) culturally transformative.

Bio: Margaret Monahan Hogan is the McNerney-Hanson Professor Emeritus of Ethics and Professor Emeritus of Philosophy of the University of Portland. She is Founding Director at the University of Portland’s Garaventa Center for Catholic Intellectual Life and American Culture. Dr. Hogan also holds fellowships at the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture and the Collegium Institute, where she is also Emeritus Director of Medical Humanities. She is a Senior Affiliate at PRRUCS Program for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society at the University of Pennsylvania

“Teleology, the Uterus, and the Rights of the Unborn”

Nicholas Ramirez (Thomistic Institute)

This paper will argue that a teleological analysis of the uterus is fundamental to the consideration of how we ought to treat unborn human life. Although the unborn have a right to life, this right to life implies the existence of a stronger right, the right of an individual to use those organs which are teleologically ordered to his survival. From this latter right, it can be deduced that the unborn child has a right to use his mother’s uterus. The effects of this conclusion on abortion, invitro fertilization, and gestational surrogacy will then be considered.



Bio: Nicholas Ramirez is a Junior Fellow for the Thomistic Institute for the 2022-2023 academic year. Nicholas earned his B.A. in Philosophy and Political Science from Drew University in 2022. His primary areas of interest include ethics, philosophy of religion, and the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas. He wrote his senior thesis on bodily rights arguments for abortion titled, “The Limping Violinist: Why Thomson’s Defense of Abortion Does Not Establish the Conclusion that Abortion is Morally Permissible.”

“Our Kind of Person’ – The Significance of Species-Membership in the Debate About Abortion”

James Mumford (University of Virginia)

Teleology doesn’t seem to cut it in our nominalist culture. Appeals to teleological arguments in the debate about abortion fall on deaf ears. No one seems impressed by the fact the newborn belongs to a kind, and our kind no less. Instead, people distinguish between ‘human beings’ and ‘persons’ in order to exclude very young members of our species who do not (or do not yet) display the quality or attribute we value as distinctly human. But to reject teleology, I maintain in this paper, is to ignore our fundamental situation in the world. Kinship is the ineliminable context of our emergence. A species is the place where we find ourselves. To disregard this reality is to disregard the conditions from which we arise to take our life, thus forcing an existential contradiction upon us. (We act as if we ourselves came from nowhere, sprung from mushrooms). What’s more, the theological contention that the creation of men and women is ‘very good’ reminds us that the privileging of our kind is no arbitrary ‘speciesism’ – there are certainly qualities which ennoble us above the beasts. The problem is when we make the demonstration of those qualities a criterion for entry into the community.

Bio: Dr. James Mumford, author of *Vexed: Ethics Beyond Political Tribes*, and Fellow, The University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture.

**“On the Seventh Day, He Rested’: On the Sabbath”**

Saturday, November 12, 9:00-10:15 a.m. | Room 202 | Chair: Aquinas Beale, OP (University of Notre Dame)

“The Sabbath in Thomas and P”

Noelle Johnson (University of Notre Dame)

Thomas’ treatment of the moral precepts of the Old Law in *Summa Theologiae* I-II 100 is incomprehensible apart from his scriptural exegesis. This paper does two things: articulates the role that Scriptural exegesis plays in the context of Thomas’ thought on the relationship between the moral and ceremonial law, and secondly compares his conclusions to critical scholarship of the Pentateuch. I argue that although Thomas’ exegesis does not proceed by the same principles as modern exegesis, granting his presupposition of the unity of the two testaments, his exegesis captures concerns similar to the Hebrew Bible’s thought-world in its historical particularity.

Bio: Noelle Johnson is a Ph.D. student in Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity at Notre Dame and a recipient of the Notebaert Premier Fellowship. She is a member of the Graduate Theological Society, and a Sorin Fellow at the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, having most recently received a grant from the dCEC to study Modern Hebrew in Israel this past summer. She previously graduated from Notre Dame with a degree in theology and physics and a Master of Theological Studies. During her time as an undergrad, she served as President of Notre Dame Right to Life and wrote for *Church Life Journal*.

”All Time Belongs to Him, and All the Ages’: John Paul II and the Recovery of the Practice of the Lord’s Day”

Brian Pedraza (Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University)

This paper argues that John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Dies Domini* correctly identifies the Lord’s Day as the Christian fulfillment of the Sabbath (a claim not at first apparent in the biblical and historical data). As such, the relationship between the two is one of continuity and newness. Stemming from this, the paper encourages a recovery of the practice of the Lord’s Day as essential for the Church’s



identity and mission, since it both instantiates Christ's presence in and lordship over time and reveals the vocation of humanity in relation to the life of faith, hope, and charity.

Bio: Brian Pedraza, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Theology at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He has published articles in *Church Life*, *The Catechetical Review*, *First Things*, and the *Josephinum Journal of Theology*. His book, *Catechesis for the New Evangelization: Vatican II, John Paul II, and the Unity of Revelation and Experience*, was published by CUA Press (2020).

**“The Theology and Ethics of Sabbath Rest in Augustine of Hippo and Jürgen Moltmann”
Nathaniel Peters (The Morningside Institute)**

This paper explores the theology of the Sabbath in Augustine of Hippo and the contemporary protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann. In his later works, Augustine emphasizes the Sabbath as the final achievement of sanctification, the reward given for graced good works performed by the love of the indwelling Holy Spirit. For Moltmann, the Sabbath serves as the time when God withdraws from creation to return to himself, thereby giving creation the freedom to exist in relationship to him. The Sabbath also reminds human beings that their vocation is one of service to creation, not simply use of it.

Bio: Nathaniel Peters is the Director of the Morningside Institute, which brings scholars and students together to examine enduring ideas, create intellectual friendship, and enrich these ideas and friendships with the vibrant life of New York City. He received his B.A. from Swarthmore College, his M.T.S. from the University of Notre Dame, and his Ph.D. in historical theology from Boston College. He has published articles and reviews in *Religious Studies Review*, *America*, *Commonweal*, *First Things*, *Public Discourse*, and *Plough Quarterly*.

**“I Address My Verses to the King’: Creation in Poetry”**

Saturday, November 12, 9:00-10:15 a.m. | ROOM 206/207 | Chair: Tamara Nicholl-Smith
(University of St. Thomas, Houston)

“Can Trust Itself to Go By Contraries’: Creation Narrative and Creative Relationship in Robert Frost’s ‘West-Running Brook’”

Kasia Balsbaugh(Independent Scholar)

In his poem “West-Running Brook,” Robert Frost reworks language and narrative from the Genesis story to highlight a man and a woman’s creative role as a couple working on their relationship. Ultimately, Frost’s understanding of relational creativity and tensions (“contraries”) provides insight into a Christian vision for proper relationships with each other as well as with the rest of the world.

Bio: Kasia Balsbaugh graduated summa cum laude from Hillsdale College with a degree in English. She reads, writes, and teaches in South Bend, Indiana.

“A Poet’s Reading of the Book of Creation: St. Ephrem the Syrian’s Hymns as Microcosm”
Andrew Hayes (University of St. Thomas, Houston)

In a recent book, Jeffrey Wickes argues that St. Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306-373) uses the Bible not simply as a theological source, but to construct an entire poetic world. This paper explores Ephrem’s use of the book of creation to create his own poetic world and seeks to answer the question of how, if we too take seriously the “creation as book” thesis, we can actually read that book without misreading it. This paper works principally with Ephrem’s *Hymns on Faith* (the subject of Wickes’ book), and also includes important passages from his *Hymns against Heresies* and his *Metrical Discourses on Faith*.

Bio: Dr. Andrew Hayes is Division Dean for Liberal Studies, Director of the Core Fellows, and Associate Professor of Theology at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He specializes particularly in asceticism, spirituality, and theological poetics in the thought of St. Ephrem the Syrian (4th century), with a focus on the intersection between Ephrem’s literary forms and his approach to human communion with God. His recent publications include, among others, an annotated translation of Ephrem’s *Metrical Discourses on Faith* (Peeters, 2020), and



“St. Ephrem and the Pursuit of Wisdom,” in *Eastern Christian Approaches to Philosophy* (Palgrave, 2022).

“Creation within the Poet’s Response to Alienation from Nature”

Chris Petter (Howard University)

This paper addresses what Wilbur calls the “lyric relation” established by certain poets of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In contrast to a Victorian view of nature found in the poems of Mathew Arnold and Thomas Hardy—nature as a “naked irrelevance”—Gerard Manley Hopkins, Richard Wilbur, and others open the lyric possibilities of renewed vision, relation, and re-creation.

Bio: Dr. Chris Petter received his doctorate in English from Catholic University in 2021, writing a dissertation titled *Richard Wilbur’s Second Nature: Poetic Convention and the Organic*. He is an instructor in English at Howard University and CUA.



“Disability and the Imago Dei”

Saturday, November 12, 9:00-10:15 a.m. | Room 215 | Chair: Charleen Katra (National Catholic Partnership on Disability)

“Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: The Case for Full Inclusion of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disability in the Church’s Teaching and Pastoral Work on Human Sexuality”

Mary O’Callaghan (University of Notre Dame and St. Mary’s College)

Despite the Catholic emphasis on human sexuality as integral to the whole person, there has been little consideration of what this means for the person with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A number of misconceptions of sexuality in those with intellectual and cognitive disabilities have arisen; particularly that these individuals are asexual, that sexuality presents a “problem” to be solved, that there is a separate morality for those with disabilities, and that sexuality is a “right”. Second, without a robust Catholic theological account of human sexuality in the case of intellectual and developmental disability, we have left these individuals and their families vulnerable to the secular field of disability and sexuality. Given the integral nature of human sexuality, sexual education rooted in Catholic teaching is essential for this population.

Bio: Mary O’Callaghan is a developmental psychologist trained in the area of intellectual and developmental disabilities. She currently serves as a Public Policy Fellow at the deNicola Center for Ethics and Culture and teaches as a Faculty Fellow in the Master of Autism Studies program at Saint Mary’s College. She and her husband John have 5 children, including her youngest son who has Down syndrome and autism.

“Investigating the Relationship between Disability and Identity through Edith Stein: Insights for Biomedical Ethics”

Mariele Courtois (Benedictine College)

Could attempts to heal ever conflict with individual identity as gifted by God? Many scholars rightly question whether some therapies are driven by a eugenic impetus. Even deeper questions from disability ethics surface as to whether and when healing disability thwarts the providential plan



intended by the Creator. St. Edith Stein (1891–1942) postulated a source of individuality from a *Persönlichkeitskern*, or “personal core,” more fundamental than the human species form. This personal core and Stein’s novel metaphysical category of essential being bear important contributions for understanding personal identity and determining permissible therapies that respect the loving language of creation.

Bio: Mariele Courtois is an Assistant Professor of Theology at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas. She obtained her Ph.D. in Moral Theology & Ethics this past May from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Her dissertation entitled “Biomedical Challenges to Identity and Parenthood: An Investigation into the Ethics of Genetic Technologies at the Beginning of Life,” explores the relationship between disability and identity utilizing the work of St. Edith Stein. She received her Bachelor of Science in biology from Loyola Marymount University, and she received her Master of Theological Studies degree from the University of Notre Dame, during which time she was a Sorin Fellow for the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture.

**“Motley Beauty: Aquinas on the Diversity of Human Bodies in the State of Innocence”
Miguel Romero (Salve Regina University)**

This presentation does two things. First, outlines a reading of Aquinas on the diversity of humanity in the state of innocence (ST Ia, q. 96, a. 3). Second, briefly outlines how Aquinas can be a resource for navigating a set of contemporary questions at the intersection of biomedicine, disability studies, and Catholic moral theology. [According to Aquinas, the presence of bizarre, kooky, and generally odd persons would have been integral to the beauty of primitive humanity in the state of innocence.] For Aquinas, inequality between persons in the state of innocence would not have been a matter of punishment and reward, but of the Providential exaltation of each particular person’s individual dignity as a being formed in the image and toward the likeness of triune God.

Bio: Dr. Miguel J. Romero is Assistant Professor of Religious and Theological Studies at Salve Regina University. He earned his B.A. from Colorado College, his M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary, his Th.M. from Duke University, and his Th.D. from Duke University in 2012. From 2012 to 2016, Dr. Romero was a postdoctoral research fellow and theology instructor at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Romero’s research interests include moral theology, Catholic social teaching, philosophical and theological accounts of disability and mental illness, and the theology of Thomas Aquinas.

**“Let Heaven and Earth Praise Him: Environmentalism in Theology”****Saturday, November 12, 9:00-10:15 a.m. | Room 216 |****“Pope Francis and Charles De Koninck on Humanity’s Responsibility toward the Cosmos”
Claire Murphy (University of Notre Dame)**

In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis explains that humanity’s capacity for intelligence, far from justifying anthropocentrism, tasks us instead with a responsibility to understand creation and facilitate its flourishing. Charles De Koninck raises this point from a Thomistic perspective, arguing that the striving of creation toward its divine end can only be fulfilled through the agency of a creature that is both intellectual and embodied. For both these thinkers, it is only by knowing and loving creation as an integrated whole, and each creature in light of that whole, that we fulfill our role in creation’s return to its creator.

Bio: Claire Murphy is a PhD student in the Program in History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Notre Dame. She studies the interplay between science, art, and nature throughout the history of philosophy.

“Caring for the Common Home: Rights of Nature or Human Stewardship?”**Monsignor Martin Schlag (University of St. Thomas) and Dr. Sacha Bourgeois-Gironde (Université Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas)**

More and more legal orders worldwide are attributing legal personhood to parts of nature: rivers, lagoons, mountains, animals, the whole of nature are becoming “persons.” In the Christian tradition, based on the Bible and Roman Law, only human beings are persons. Only human persons have inalienable natural rights that law must recognise and respect, not grant or attribute. This recent movement in law indicates a paradigmatic change in the way we envision our relationship with and commitment to nature. Granting subjective rights to nature or to some of its elements shapes new models in economics, in management, in law, or in politics. How far should we go in admitting legal and political forms of ecocentrism?



Bios: Monsignor Martin Schlag is the Alan W. Moss endowed chair for Catholic Social Thought of the John A. Ryan Institute in the Center for Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas, where he is full professor with dual appointment in the department of Catholic Studies and the Opus College of Business. He is also director of the Program for Church Management at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. Msgr. Schlag has authored more than 80 publications, among them: (together with Domènec Melé) *Humanism in Economics and Business: Perspectives of the Catholic Social Tradition*, *The Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today*, and *The Business Francis Means: Understanding the Pope's Message on the Economy*.

Dr. Sacha Bourgeois-Gironde is a Professor at Université Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas in the Center for Law and Economics.

“Jesus Christ, the End of Creation: On Christological Finality and Integral Ecology”

Keith Lemna (Saint Meinrad Seminary)

This presentation will draw on the work of Emile Mersch to establish the link between humanity and the universe as well as the importance of this linking for understanding “integral ecology.” I shall briefly suggest the possibility for deepening Mersch’s view with a more worked out metaphysics of “existential act.” The presentation will conclude by showing the Christological outcome of Mersch’s understanding of the universe as a “human universe” and will establish a connection thereby with *Laudato si’*, especially concerning the idea that all things are being led with humanity and through humanity toward their end in the Risen Christ.

Bio: Dr. Keith Lemna is an Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Saint Meinrad Seminary, in Southern Indiana. He is the author of *The Apocalypse of Wisdom: On Louis Bouyer's Recovery of the Cosmos* (Angelico Press, 2019) and the forthcoming *The Trinitarian Wisdom of God: Louis Bouyer's Theology of the God-world Relationship* (Emmaus Academic Press, 2023). He is currently working on a theological treatise that seeks to explicate the meaning of “integral ecology” in the framework of a dogmatic synthesis that also thematizes the evolutionary genesis of creation.



“Underheard Voices in the Church”

Saturday, November 12, 9:00–10:15 a.m. | Room B01 | Chair: Abigail Favale (University of Notre Dame)

“Held Fast by Iron Chains’: Narrating the Journey from Addiction to Recovery”

John Allen (Duquesne University)

Theological and ethical reflection on the practice of retrospective narration has primarily occurred at a theoretical level, begging the need for a more concrete, grounded approach. Key to unlocking the liberative struggle for sobriety is a deeper understanding of the virtue language and practical reasoning utilized by persons in recovery, wherein the individual learns to narrate her life alongside the stories of others. Analysis of individual narratives will affirm how the act of communal retrospective narration is an effective tool for moral agents to discern identity and action. By drawing from qualitative interviews with recoverees, this study articulates the theological agency manifested in the concrete lived experiences of alcoholics.

Bio: John Joseph Allen is a doctoral candidate at Duquesne University in Theology with research interests in the communal role of ethical formation as well as addiction studies. He received his M.A. in Theology from the University of Dayton and his B.A. in Anthropology from Saint Vincent College. Currently, he is the Director of the Brother David S. Baginski FSC., Scholars Program at Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

“Order in Same-Sex Love”

Eve Tushnet (Ave Maria Press)

This talk draws on Scripture, devotional poetry, theology, history, and biography to argue that the Catholic Church already has models of obedient, devoted same-sex love. So many gay Catholics have been told that our longings are “disordered,” and become ordered when they become heterosexual. What in our culture might change if we took seriously the possibilities of ordered same-sex love?



Bio: Eve Tushnet grew up in Washington, DC and became Catholic in college. She is the author of *Gay and Catholic* and *Tenderness: A Gay Christian's Guide to Unlearning Rejection and Experiencing God's Extravagant Love*, as well as two novels.

“Collectivities as Co-Creators and the Call to Love the Woke in Our Midst”

Isaac Kimmel (University of Notre Dame)

This talk will draw on philosopher Simone Weil, social theorist Margaret Archer, and Pope Francis's encyclicals to argue that the profound formative influence of communities on their members is an integral part of God's creation of each human person. As such, respect for the dignity of human persons entails respect for God's creative work in the spectacular variety of cultures and societies that form them. Thus, an authentically Catholic politics must reject suspicion, exclusion, or scorn in favor of humility, curiosity, and the search for commonality -- especially toward communities or movements whose members profess to be enemies of Christianity.

Bio: Isaac Kimmel is a doctoral candidate in the sociology department at the University of Notre Dame, and a Graduate Sorin Fellow with the deNicola Center. Isaac's dissertation research combines insights from cultural sociology, political communication, and studies of legislative decision-making to analyze policy responses to emerging events, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. Isaac holds a Master's degree in sociology from Notre Dame and a Bachelor's in philosophy from the Catholic University of America.



“Fashioned by Human Skill and Imagination: Creation in Art”

Saturday, November 12, 9:00–10:15 a.m. | Room B02 | Chair: Mike Rippy (University of Notre Dame)

“The Baroque Rhythms of Creation in The Tempest”

Andrew Moran (University of Dallas)

This paper presents Shakespeare at the end of his career, and his creation Prospero, as Baroque artists, *The Tempest* through its structure, diction, and meter akin to works like Bernini’s David and Borromini’s San Carlino. The sense of creator and creation is particularly Baroque. But the creator Prospero can only complete his project through kenosis and the acknowledgment of his creaturely dependence.

Bio: Andrew Moran is an associate professor of English at the University of Dallas and director of its summer Rome semester. He is the author of essays on Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, and Waugh.

“Whistler’s Madonna: Recovering Creativity in the Context of Sacred Art”

Andrew Smith (AWS Sculpture Studio, LLC)

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the embattled Roman Catholic Church failed to fulfill its role as the preeminent patron of the visual arts. The title of my proposed talk plays with the idea of an alternate history in which Whistler and Sargent competed for the patronage of Bostonian bishops, and Jean-Antoine Houdon devoted his career to carving votive statuary rather than statues of Voltaire. I will argue that 20th-century leadership attempted to remedy the situation in a manner that over-compensated by commissioning works by seemingly avant-garde artists who tended to produce forms unsuitable to the rhetorical and doctrinal concerns of the Church and, in many cases, despised the Church as well.

Bio: Andrew Wilson Smith, a South Bend native, is an Artist and teacher with a studio practice specializing in sacred art. Having studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art and the Florence Academy of Art, and having completed apprenticeships with several talented sculptors, Smith established AWS Sculpture Studio in 2006 and has completed commissions for numerous religious organizations and educational institutions. Prominent projects include narrative scenes and Apostles



carved into the portal of Clear Creek Abbey, in Hulbert, Oklahoma, architectural sculpture elements at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Knoxville Tennessee, and a limestone baptismal font for St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in Flower Mound, Texas. Smith is currently carving life-size marble statues of Saints, Peter and Paul, for St. Joseph's Cathedral in Jefferson City, Missouri. More information at www.AndrewWilsonSmith.com

“In Tune with the World: Music, Morality, and the Created Order”

Michael Krom (Saint Vincent College)

In this talk I will focus on music as that form of art most capable of shaping or deforming our character, of tuning it to the world or to worldliness. Beginning with Josef Pieper's contrast between celebratory and two types of nihilistic music (“music of the happy sound . . . [and] of the numbing beat”) I will provide examples of nihilism in contemporary music. Next, I will turn to Plato, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and Boethius for insights into the nature of music as a language capable of producing a three-fold harmonizing of cosmos, soul, and sound.

Bio: Michael Krom is the Director of Benedictine Leadership Studies at Saint Vincent College, an undergraduate program that shapes servant leaders rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church and in Benedictine spirituality. In addition, he serves as Chair of the Philosophy Department. He recently authored a second book, *Justice and Charity: An Introduction to Aquinas's Moral, Economic, and Political Thought* (Baker Academic Press), which grew out of his efforts to provide seminarians at Saint Vincent Seminary with a solid foundation for Catholic Social Teaching. Currently, he works on the history and nature of Benedictine education, and his focus on music stems from his commitment to forming undergraduates rooted in a Catholic, Benedictine, liberal arts education.