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[Book Review of] *Christian Ethics and Imagination: A Theological Inquiry*, by Philip S. Keane, S.S.

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dealing with the media and the effective use of advertising.

Some of his best work is near the end of the book in Chapter 96: *Be a Prayer Warrior*. The way to stop abortion is to pray as though everything depended on God and to work as though everything depends on you." In Chapter 97, *Whatever You Do, Do It with Love*, he says "Pro-life is a movement based on the highest form of altruism so there is no room for hatred." Chapter 98: *You Are the Pro-life Movement*, offers, "The pro-life movement is everyone who works, suffers and sacrifices for the unborn." He states in Chapter 99, *Write the Next Chapter Yourself*, "This is a Manifesto for which you or perhaps your children will write the final chapter."

If and when the final chapter is written on abortion, it will not be in the text as we presently understand it. There will be significant breakthroughs in medicine and science. The composition of the Supreme Court and other key judicial positions will change. Pharmacology will make a substantial impact on abortion in the future. Politics, legislation and laws will shift with public opinion and time. However, the most profound change must be in the minds and hearts of the American people.

The urgency remains for pro-life activists to rescue as many lives as they can. Front and center is Joseph Scheidler, the personification of the "abortion fighter" he describes in Chapter 69, "a tireless, aggressive, imaginative, daring and optimistic individual who carefully plans his strategy and accomplishes what he sets out to do." This author is unwilling to allow the abortion industry the comfortable anonymity and respectability it so desperately desires. His aim is to maximize the involvement of the pro-life activists.

Closed, 99 Ways to Stop Abortion is a manual which will be of great influence and value to those who are interested in being part of the pro-life front line.

Albert Schweitzer once said, "Example is not the most important thing in influencing others, it is the only thing." Joseph Scheidler, with this book, provides 99 examples.

— Mary O'Malley, Chairman
Shady Grove Pregnancy Center
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Christian Ethics and Imagination: A Theological Inquiry

by Philip S. Keane, S.S.

Paulist Press, N. Y.: 1984

What prompted Keane to write this book is the tendency, he perceives, of moral theology to rely too heavily on forms of moral argument which are logical, discursive, and positivistic. He thinks that we need more than discursive logic to address successfully the kinds of problems facing us today (p. 14). He hopes that a better use of imagination and creativity will enable us to understand our moral principles, and make appropriate applications of these to concrete problems in the moral life. He appeals to such themes as virtue, narrative, liturgy, and beauty as avenues to new understandings and deeper insights into the human condition. His intent is to make a contribution to the development of a theology of imagination and ethics which is both systematic and practical (p.20).

After two chapters on examples of non-discursive aspects of Christian thought and contemporary insights on the use of imagination, Keane comes to his most important chapter — Chapter 4 — which attempts to make a comprehensive statement of what moral

imagination is and why it is so important. He describes imagination as a playful suspension of judgment leading us toward a more appropriate grasp of reality (p. 81), by combining the concrete and the universal elements of our experience in new ways. Since this is the heart of the book, it deserves some critical engagement. On pp. 105-9 Keane gives his explanation of how the moral imagination functions.

The first phase is the forming of images, both of the actions being considered and of the pertinent moral principles. These images come out of a person's cultural and educational experience. But Keane does not tell us how to distinguish between true and false moral principles, or even which half of a half-truth is true. He presumes that whatever moral principle one determines out of their experience is true, or at least true for them. But moral principles are not that subjective. One of the teaching Church's great tasks is to propose good moral principles to us and point out impostures and counterfeits among pseudo-principles. Since moral judgments depend upon reliable and true principles, identifying them is crucial. Keane thinks that if a person suspends judgment based upon past convictions, and playfully explores his recent experience, he will come up with more meaningful principles. Will he?

The next step is to let these images have their impact on one another. "We reflect on our moral images, seeking to get further and further into the real depth of what they mean, seeking to fit the images together in a way which will lead to a genuinely good moral choice." (p. 106) But Keane does not tell us how we will know when we have a good fit. He presumes that, with sufficient imagination, all our imagined options for moral action and of moral principles can find a morally good resolution. This ignores real conflicts between mutually opposed positions e.g., pro-abortion/choice and pro-life positions; e.g., homosexual acts are morally wrong or they are not. It ignores also the human penchant for massive, if subtle, self-deception. It does not make room for some principles which are simply non-negotiable. It does not help us determine whether our combination of images reflects the influence of our secular culture or of our Faith, which is often counter-cultural. It simply gives us new possibilities, a compromise acceptable to all parties, new solutions to old problems, without providing us with criteria by which we might determine the value of our image combinations.

The third function of the moral imagination is to make moral judgments about how we should act. How does this judgment happen? Keane thinks that it is never simply by logic, and never simply based on authority. Rather, judgments must involve imagination which deals with figure and form, matter and space, the way in which things are arranged or fit together. "Imaginative moral judgments thus concern how our actions and our principles fit together; they are judgments of the fitting or of the coherent" (p. 108). From our practical, playful, imagining reason we discern what is most fitting and judge that to be the appropriate course of action. But are "fittingness" and "coherency" adequate criteria for judgments about the morality of a human choice and act under consideration? Fitting to what? Coherent with what? A *Weltanschauung*, such as National Socialism, appealingly presented, with some political victories behind it, was seen by many Germans in the 1930's as very acceptable. They could see themselves living in conformity with this *Weltanschauung*. But was it right? Was it true? Today, we find that Christianity is often counter-cultural, even offensive to others. One need only think about the reactions to the pro-life position in our society, even among some women religious. Judgments of the fitting and the coherent still depend upon using the right (= true) set of principles based upon a true sense of human dignity.

One of the problems I had with this book is the various meanings Keane gives to the act of imagination. For example, he states (p. 86):

But if we conceive of imagination as a more broadly based human operation involving intelligence and will as well as sense, imagination in itself can be seen as containing principles of association, judgment, and discipline which are called to regulate the play of impressions in a productive fashion. There can be immoral uses of imagination, but such uses are not the purpose or thrust of imagination.

Clearly, Keane is mixing processes of thinking which ought to be kept distinct. One also wonders, when one suspends judgment, how he is to discern an "immoral use of imagination." Elsewhere, (p. 102), he states that imagination wants to get at the deepest human meanings. By so doing, he describes imagination as most people would describe the use of good reason.

Keane fails to see the vital role which moral principles play in the moral life. They are more than rules of thumb, or lists of instructions. He cautions against absolutizing the relative, but he ought also to caution against relativizing the absolute. Principles (e.g., the Ten Commandments and their specifications) are derived from human goods and human values which, in turn, are derived from our dignity as human persons as God gave that dignity to us. Principles indicate to us how these goods and values are enhanced and protected. The Fifth Commandment helps us understand that human life is sacred in all its aspects. The moral absolute forbidding abortion directly intended, is only one specification of the commandment. If we understand the values behind moral principles, then we have a better understanding of their implications for daily life, their applications. This is what Keane calls the role of imagination. "If sound moral principles are not enough to work out an adequate approach to death and to care for the dying, I think our deepest need is for a renewed understanding of death . . . most readily available through an exercise of imagination" (p. 113). If by imagination the author means deeper insight, clear thinking, examining what heretofore was taken for granted, probing beneath the surface, then I would agree with him. But then, why doesn't he say that? For another example of this see p. 120d.

What Keane says about the use of stories and real-life heroes and heroines in illustrating moral principles is very good and true. One might also add that examples and stories must be carefully chosen. He who determines the example also determines the meaning assigned to a principle.

He draws upon a rich resource of reading, and his endnotes are very extensive. However, most of his Catholic writers are of the McCormick-Curran camp; scant mention is made of the Grisez-Lawler-May camp. A real plus for Keane is his skillful use of language. The reader easily understands the points he is making. Furthermore, he has a real talent for giving overviews of complex ideas, e.g., transcendental Thomism and the hermeneutic circle. But his presentation of these concepts and many others presented here suffer from a lack of depth. He frequently excuses himself from probing into details on problems which arise soon after a facile overview (cf. p. 110).

When a writer of Christian morality loses an imprimatur from his book on sexual morality (*Sexual Morality: A Catholic Perspective*), one wonders how well he can exercise responsible imagination. One wonders also why Paulist Press continues to advertise it, or list it as one of Keane's credits. In an imaginary world, everything one imagines seems possible. In the real world, there are certain "stubborn realities" which won't go away. If the moral life (the Christian life) is to find guidance from the imagination, it will result from a clear understanding of the difference between what is possible and what is not.

There are some unhappy phrases in the text. ". . . in terms of a person's moral worth and dignity, it is more important that a person be sure of his or her choices than that he or she be correct" (p. 46). Sincerity takes preference to truth? "Heidegger, in his famous analytic of *Dasein*, argues that the very act of finite historical knowing about events is essentially a true metaphysical reality" (p. 54).

On page 54d he states: "From this perspective, both works of history and the works of fiction are equally able to convey reality to us." But can Keane tell us the difference between reality and fiction? In fiction the author, or playwright, can do anything and call it "real" e.g., Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*, in which Pius XII is depicted as uninterested and insensitive to the plight of the Jews in WWII. Many people today believe this, because they have not troubled themselves to read reliable sources by Jewish authors about what really happened.

On page 56, Keane states: "For Ricoeur, the world the text opens out in front of us is more than the world of scientific logic; it is a world of meaning mediated through texts."

Moral principles interpreted through this kind of approach to texts would be principles which give us genuine meaning and truth. Such moral principles would surely not lead us into relativism." Why not?

One final example of a misleading statement is on p. 125. "To move to the other side, the dominant image of those who see artificial birth control as moral in some cases is the image of the sexual union as good, as strengthening the covenant of married love. From this viewpoint, to make it impossible or nearly impossible for a married couple to have intercourse becomes clearly wrong."

Keane is simply wrong here. Natural Family Planning is a proven and effective way of morally planning one's family. It does not turn against the affective, love-giving dimension of conjugal love, and it overcomes any apparent contradiction between divine law and the need for ongoing expression of conjugal life.

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The Psychology of Self and Other

by Elizabeth R. Moberly

Tavistock Publications, London, New York, 1985, pp. viii+117 pp., \$17.95.

In this volume Elizabeth Moberly develops still further the views expressed in her previous work, *Psychogenesis and Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic*, both of which I reviewed in *Linacre Quarterly* during 1984. Although the focus in this work is on narcissistic and borderline psychopathologies, the insights can be readily applied to homosexuality. Indeed, during August, 1985, at a *Metanoia Ministries* workshop at La Grange Park, Ill., Dr. Moberly showed how her research can help all those professionally engaged in helping homosexual persons. Thus, as I summarize the basic ideas of this volume, I hope the reader will see their applicability to therapy for homosexual men and women. Perhaps some will dissent, and that could lead to a profitable exchange among us. I remember how, 20 months ago, I was greeted by a theologian-psychologist after I had presented Moberly's views. "It sounds to me like warmed-over Freudianism."

The author begins with a review of basic Freudian concepts in which she shows where she deviates from the Freudian position. Concerning repression, she says that the issue "is not instinctual *danger* but instinctual *unfulfilment*." The love object is perceived as hurtful and for this reason, the normal attachment need to that object is held back (repressed). The overall goal must therefore be the restoration of attachment while the undoing of repression must be regarded as only a means to this end, not as an end in itself. "Merely undoing the repression while there is no restoration of attachment to the object does not resolve the problem, but creates only a greater awareness of it." One must get beyond the resolution of conflict. "The objective must be to resume and continue what the conflict originally hindered, viz., the fulfilment of an attachment need."

Once freed from their protective repression, attachment needs should be fulfilled through the medium of a restored attachment. Such needs cannot be fulfilled in any other way. "The reinstatement of an attachment need would involve the *continuation* of what was originally checked." From this point of view, the persistence of compulsive activity indicates an unmet need whose fulfilment is necessary for normal development. *Conscious*