

5-2018

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Juan Pablo Valenzuela

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**VIRTUE ETHICS AS MORAL FORMATION
FOR IGNATIAN EDUCATION IN CHILE**

A thesis by
Juan Pablo Valenzuela, S.J.

presented to The Faculty of the
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in
partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of
Licentiate in Sacred Theology
Berkeley, California
May 2018

Committee Signatures

Lisa Fullam, Director May 9, 2018

Eduardo Fernández, S.J. Reader May 9, 2018

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A thesis by Juan Pablo Valenzuela, S.J

ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church in Chile is in a state of moral perplexity. On one side, the hierarchy of the Church, moral theologians, and teachers propose and teach a morality based on rules and principles that does not take account of the context of the country and creates a distance from the moral perspective of the majority of the Chilean people. On the other side, Catholic people are abandoning the Church, especially because of her approach to moral issues and her rule-based moral teachings. The problem of this moral perplexity lies in the deontological approach through which the Church proposes and teaches morality. Moral principles are not capable of properly addressing the cultural changes of Chilean society, and moral rules are not enough to provide an appropriate moral formation for the generations to come. This thesis proposes virtue ethics as a better suited approach for the current context and time because is capable of addressing the context and promoting moral development through the language of virtues. Virtue ethics is also more capable of offering a better approach for moral formation because it focuses on the moral character of the person, instead of moral rules. This integrative formation will prepare Catholic people to face the future and the moral challenges from the perspective of their faith.

Lisa Fullam, Director

May 9, 2018

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INTRODUCTION

The number of people that consider themselves Catholic in Chile has decreased in ten years from 67 to 58 percent of the population.¹ Even while Chile is still a South American “Catholic country”, the society has changed in the last decades and those cultural changes affect the way in which the Chilean people see the Catholic Church and her teachings. According to studies, the main disagreement of Chilean society with the teachings of the Catholic Church is not about faith, doctrine, or sacraments, but about her perspective on morality.

The Church, at the middle of the twentieth century, received from the second Vatican Council a call for renewal. That spirit of renewal from the Council changed the life of the Church, her liturgy, sacraments and a renewed enthusiasm for biblical studies. The only dimension of the Church that remained almost untouched was moral theology and morality. Many dimensions of the Church changed after that council, but the approach to morality and moral theology was unattended. The Church is still in need of a renewal of her moral life, her moral proposal to the people of God, and also is in need of a renewal of Catholic moral formation.

Chile experienced a military dictatorship from 1973 to 1989 where thousands of people were assassinated, tortured, and exiled from the country. Chilean society has been dedicated from 1990 to the present to the process of rebuilding the country, its social institutions and commitment to democracy. The country learned from the traumatic

¹ Alan Cooperman, James Bell and Neha Sahgal, *Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region*, (November 2014). <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2014/11/Religion-in-Latin-America-11-12-PM-full-PDF.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2018)

experience of oppression by a dictator the high value of freedom, diversity and dialogue. The new generations of Chilean people have grown in that new culture that values personal and social freedom, respect, and promotes so diversity and dialogue as antidotes for the use of violence and force. The Catholic Church has been always present in crucial moments of Chile's history, contributing with the best of her wisdom and knowledge. In the present time, when the society is experiencing cultural changes, Chilean people are still in need of the guidance and wisdom of the Catholic Church, but the Church has to find a suitable approach and a proper language to do so.

The virtue ethics approach offers to the Church the best suited approach for the current time and context of Chile. The developmental character of this approach would be the perfect match for a society that wants to morally improve and for people who wants to be better than the past. The focus of virtue ethics on the person instead of moral principles would really concur with a society that has learned from the past and wants to respect human dignity and life above any rule or political ideology. The centrality of the human moral character and the optimistic developmental approach make virtue ethics a well-suited approach for Chile today.

The future of the Church and the future of Chile depends on the children and youth of today. Education is the path for a bright future of the country and formation is the path for the Church to have more aware, generous and virtuous Catholic people in the future. The Church has the responsibility to form Catholic youth in faith and morality, and to prepare them for the challenges of the future. The best Catholic formation is the one that offers the best of its wisdom and pedagogy to the people of God. In the same way that the Church has been offering Bible study through workshops, spiritual formation through retreats or preparing people to receive the sacraments through a renewed catechesis, the

moral formation should also be updated and contextualized in order to make it more effective and meaningful. At the end of this thesis I am proposing the virtue ethics approach as the best moral framework to provide a moral formation for students in Catholic schools. This proposal of virtue ethics for moral formation is not a curriculum, neither an exhaustive program of moral formation, but can provide a virtue ethics approach that in combination with spiritual, sacramental and faith formation could offer something better for the Catholic people of the future.

I - MORAL PERPLEXITY IN CHILE

Introduction

In terms of morality, the current situation of the Catholic people in Chile could be described as moral perplexity.² The majority of Catholic people in Chile that participates actively in the Church has a very good experience in celebrating the sacraments, learning about their faith, praying, and exercising the ministries of charity and mercy. It seems that sacramental, ministerial and spiritual dimensions of their faith are harmoniously part of their identity as Catholics. On the other hand, the same Catholic people feel dissatisfaction in their moral dimension and a sense of paralyzing perplexity. This moral perplexity consists of a disconnect between the moral teachings of the Church and the actual moral experience of the people of faith. Today in Chile, it is very difficult for Catholic people to simply accept the moral commandments of the Church and follow the moral rules without questioning the approach and the language that the ecclesiastical authorities tend to use. From the perspective of the people of God, the current approach for morality seems outdated, unintelligible, and paralyzing. Instead of being an engaging moral proposal for the life of the disciples of Christ, the current approach of Catholic morality looks more like a set of rules to follow in order to be immaculate.

² The term 'moral perplexity' here is a state in which the moral life of the people seems to be paralyzed and morally underdeveloped because of a deontological moral approach. Moral perplexity in Chile differs from Edmund N. Santurri's who explains the concept of moral perplexity as "a seemingly irresolvable conflict between moral requirements" in which a moral transgression is unavoidable. The cause of the perplexity in the context of Chile is not the conflict between two moral requirements, but the result of an unsuitable approach to morality and an insufficient moral formation. The moral perplexity exposed here is closer to the concept of moral perplexity of W.D. Falk "Moral Perplexity," *Ethics* 66, (Jan 1956), 123-131.

The following chapter will describe the antecedents of that moral perplexity: the changes in the Church after the Second Vatican Council and the changes in the Chilean society after seventeen years of military dictatorship. After that, I will explain how the deontological approach to morality has an important role to play in the distance between the Chilean society and the Catholic Church in the present time. I will also describe how this moral perplexity and distance has grown since 1990 and what are its effects in the life of Catholic people today. I will also describe the four most challenging areas of moral theology that require critical attention for the sake of the future of the Church. Finally, I will argue the need for a more suitable moral approach to morality in the Church and a better moral formation.

Second Vatican Council: The Church Changed

A *concilium*, or a council, is the major instance of authority for matters of faith and morals in the Catholic Church. A council is a theological and ecclesial event that occurs when the Church needs to discuss and deepen critical aspects of the doctrine of faith. Also, the pope can call for a council in particular situations when the Church has to embrace cultural changes or needs to review her own ecclesial life. Through a council, the Church is able to listen the will of God for the entire Church in different times and circumstances. The last council of the Church was in Vatican City, convoked by Pope John XXIII in October 1962. It encouraged renewal in the church in many aspects: dogmatic theology, worship and liturgical life, sacraments, canon law, role of the lay people, religious life, and the very structure of the Church.³ This was a renewal that the Church needed for centuries.

³ Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher, eds., *The Documents of Vatican II*, An Angelus Book (New York: Guild Press, 1966).

Surprisingly, several topics discussed during the council had not been discussed since the council of Trent (1545 -1563).⁴ Overall, the time of the council was a time of renewal and inspiration for the Church in many areas, but especially theology. The Council invited theologians and scholars from all over the world to re-think and develop a theology more connected with the context and with the lives of the people of God.

The Council's spirit of renewal had a double goal: to both update the Church for the new context of the twentieth century and also preserve the traditional teachings. In its own words, the Council kept itself in a healthy tension between updating theology 'according to the signs of the times' while looking back for inspiration in the sources of faith and revelation in the tradition of the first centuries of the Church.⁵

That *aggiornamento* for the Church as a whole will mean: a recovery of the original gospel, its spirit and purposes, and an adaptation of it which will be at once faithful to the same gospel as originally given and suited to 'the changed conditions of the times.'⁶

The tension between the new and the old wisdom was fruitful and helped to develop a theology that completely changed the life of the Church. For example, thanks to the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, there was a new, better, and closer approach to the sacred scriptures. This Constitution invited scripture scholars to develop new translations, to pursue more academic studies using modern historical-critical methodologies, and to provide easier access to the Bible for the people of God.⁷ This document changed and renewed the relation

⁴ B. C. Butler, *The Theology of Vatican II*, The Sarum Lectures 1966 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1968), 5.

⁵ Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 201.

⁶ Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, 18.

⁷ Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 124.

of the Catholic people with the scriptures. Another constitution of the council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, affected the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.⁸ Through this document, the council changed and updated the way of worshiping and celebrating the sacraments. Such a liturgical reform was a renewal that had not been seen in more than five hundred years. Even bigger changes were promoted in the Church by the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* and the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*.⁹ In summary, many areas of Catholic theology and dimensions of the life of the Church were renewed: Ecclesiology, Liturgy, Scriptures, Missiology, Sacraments, Patristics and Dogmatic Theology.

There was one particular area of theology that did not receive much attention or renewal: moral theology. This area of theology was not at the very center of the concerns and urgencies of the theologians during the council. Actually, the very brief mention of moral theology is in the decree *Optatam totius*, where the renewal of moral theology is mentioned as follows:

Special care must be given to the perfecting of moral theology. Its scientific exposition, nourished more on the teaching of the Bible, should shed light on the loftiness of the calling of the faithful in Christ and the obligation that is theirs of bearing fruit in charity for the life of the world.¹⁰

The call to perfect moral theology from the Second Vatican Council has three elements: is a calling for a more scientific exposition of moral theology, that should be better nourished from the Bible, and that should shed light over the lives of the people. First, the invitation encourages moral theologians to seriously work to develop moral theology in a

⁸ Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

⁹ Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 183.

¹⁰ Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 452.

more scientific exposition. Secondly, the document calls for a richer connection between moral theology and the Bible and therefore, a call for integration of morality and faith, morality and Scriptures, morality and the life of the Church. Finally, the council called for a moral theology able to shed light on the lives of God's people. The council called for a moral theology dedicated to illuminate the lives of the believers, making them understand the high dignity of their calling from Christ and their responsibility to spread the fruits of charity in the world.¹¹

After the council came an exciting time of theological investigations and pastoral implementations. The spirit of renewal inspired new movements in many different dimensions of the life of the Church.¹² Efforts after the Council included translating the thinking of the council and the inspired words of the documents into the pastoral life of the Church. Even today, theologians continue the process of appropriation of the teachings of Vatican II and the application of the insights in areas like biblical studies, liturgy, and religious life. In the realm of moral theology, the journey to develop a renewed approach has been very difficult. Keenan recalls the tension for moral theology after the Council:

Fritz Tillman, Gerard Gilleman, Josef Fuchs, and Bernard Haring turned to Scripture, a renewed study of Thomas Aquinas, and ascetical theology to amplify the task of contemporary moral theology. They recognized the love of God as foundational for moral theology, incorporated Scripture's many insights about virtue into a relational anthropological vision, asserted the primacy of conscience and challenged the notion of moral truth as universal, eternal and immutable. [...] But shortly afterwards, Pope Paul VI's *Humanae vitae* reasserted the manualists' notion of moral truth and their insistence on avoiding certain actions at all cost. By the end of the twentieth century, popes and many bishops identified their moral teachings with

¹¹ Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 452.

¹² Pamela E. J. Jackson and Pius, *An Abundance of Graces: Reflections on Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Hillenbrand Books Studies Series (Chicago; Mundelein, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2004).

the manualistic method and stood in opposition to the approach of many contemporary moral theologians.¹³

This tension is one of the antecedents for the current moral perplexity of the Catholic people in Chile. The Church might have changed after the Vatican Council II in many aspects, including moral theology and morality but it did not. As a consequence of this mismatch changes and developments, Catholic moral theology and morality are still underdeveloped in comparison of the other dimensions of theology and faith.

After the Vatican Council, the Church in Chile changed and as result of the changes of the Council, more people felt excited to participate in the Church, there was an increase in the number of young men entering the seminaries and a high participation and active presence of youth in all the Church initiatives. The Church opened her eyes to the reality and found ways of celebrating and living the gospel as a response to the 'signs of the times' of the modern world.¹⁴

Military Dictatorship: The Society Changed

The seventeen years from 1973 to 1989 were a period of traumatic dictatorship for the Chilean society.¹⁵ Similar to the experience of war, life in this dictatorship changed the country, especially the moral, cultural, and socio-political mindset of its people. The society

¹³ Daniel J. Harrington and James F. Keenan, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges Between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward : Rowman and Littlefield publishers),7.

¹⁴ María Antonieta Huerta and Luis Pacheco Pastene, *La Iglesia Chilena y Los Cambios Sociopolíticos*, (Santiago: Pehuén : CISOC-Bellarmino, 1988).

¹⁵ Between 1950 and 1998, almost all countries in Latin American had an episode of dictatorship or civil war. Some examples of violent social movements are the Cuban revolution in 1959, the Guatemalan civil war from 1960 to 1996, the Salvadorian civil war from 1980 to 1992 and the Sandinista revolution in 1979. In 1978 for example, the only democratic countries were Costa Rica, Venezuela and Colombia. Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Paraguay had violent military dictatorships supported by the American C.I.A. For more, see: Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal S. Pérez Liñan, *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

and its values were shaped by the authority during those years in order to keep the public order under the rule of fear. The congress was dissolved; the executive power was exercised by a military dictator; and the system of justice was completely under the control of the armed forces. Those seventeen years of terror affected the core of the Chilean society and its national values, such as freedom, life, and democracy. The social trauma and the effects of the brutality, torture, massive assassinations, and political persecution last until today.¹⁶ In Chile there is an entire generation of people that grew up in fear under the oppression of a military dictatorship and without civil liberties. There was no freedom of speech; there was fear of thinking critically, fear of being different, and fear of dissent. In that macabre scenario, the only social institution that was able to stand with some level of independence was the Catholic Church. In those dark times, she played an important role in defending human rights, opposing torture, and helping recover democratic processes.¹⁷

In the nineties, Chilean society changed dramatically. The dictatorship ended; society tried to move forward, rebuild its social fabric, and start a new era of reconciliation, democracy, and justice. The society underwent a process of reformulating its own values and identity. After 1990, the Chilean society reasserted the value of democracy, personal freedoms, human rights, revolutionary thinking, and dissent from the establishment. A new value for the freedom of expression and speech was accompanied with a spirit of individualism and distrust of institutions. Court battles about cases of violations of human

¹⁶ Hugo Cancino Troncoso, *Chile, Iglesia y Dictadura 1973-1989: Un Estudio Sobre El Rol Político de La Iglesia Católica y El Conflicto Con El Régimen Militar*, 1st ed, Odense University Studies in History and Social Sciences, vol. 201 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997).

¹⁷ Bradley Graham, "Pope tells Chile's bishops to press for free elections," *Washington Post*, (April 3, 1987). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1987/04/03/pope-tells-chiles-bishops-to-press-for-free-elections/ac4d8490-92c1-4e45-a638-7b427e037bc3/> (accessed April 20, 2018).

rights and the process of reconciliation raised new moral issues. Further, society experienced moral questions related to poverty, housing, unemployment, divorce, access to education, health care, justice, corruption, crime, and drug trafficking. The decade from 1990 to 2000 was a time of social maturation and growth, a new spring of democracy, and an exciting process of renewed independence from the oppression.

In giving more value to freedom and democracy, a new question arose in Chilean society about the relationship between civil society and the Catholic Church. The civil society questioned the structure of the Church as institution, its hegemonic place in the faith of the country, its hierarchical structure, the lack of democracy in decision-making, the lack of female leadership, and the inability for free thinking and disagreement. The most sensitive areas of conflict and disagreement between the civil society and the Church involved ethics and morality. After the dictatorship, civil society accentuated the importance of the recently recovered liberties and rights. Democracy promised people freedom and responsibility to preserve that freedom and the political process. From the 1990s to present, Chilean society has emphasized the preservation of democracy, the critical importance of representational politics, the necessity for the free exchange of ideas, and the agency of common people in socially constructing national politics in the wake of dictatorial oppression.

The Relation Between the Society and the Church Changed

Currently, there is a distance between the Church and Chilean society, especially in their different approaches to morality. This distance is the consequence of mutual misunderstanding and lack of dialogue. In order to understand this state of distance, it is necessary to pay attention to the past of the Church in Chile and her contributions to the moral life of the society. The past would provide the perspective to understand the present

status of relation between the Church and the society and the most likely future of that relation according to the direction that the Chilean society and the Church are going.

In the past, the morality of the Church has done great things for the Chilean society. In the sixties, for example, the Church was able to see a situation of great injustice and change it. In that time, the majority of the farming lands of the country belonged to a few rich landowners. They had poor farmers working for them who lived in conditions barely better than slavery. The Catholic Church denounced that situation as greed, as an injustice, and as immorality. The Church also took action by giving away her own farming lands and territories for poor farmers.¹⁸ Finally, the Church also pushed Chilean lawmakers to pass agrarian reform to more equitably redistribute the farming territories in the country.

During the dictatorship, facing the violation of human rights and the assassination of hundreds of people, the Church fought for the dignity and lives of people being tortured by the military regime.¹⁹ Catholic leaders denounced the horrors of torture, murder, and exile. They actively contributed to the restoration of democracy, justice, peace, and reconciliation.²⁰

¹⁸ William C. Thiesenhusen, *Reforma Agraria En Chile: Experimento En Cuatro Fondos De la Iglesia Católica*, Publicaciones Del Instituto de Economía y Planificación, no. 96 (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, Instituto de Economía y Planificación, 1967).

¹⁹ Jose Aldunate has a collection of stories of people who were tortured and people living under systematic violence during the years of the Dictatorship. Many of this persecuted people were Catholic and the Church was able to provide for them a theological framework to understand what was happening from a Catholic perspective. The theological approach to address those situations was the approach of Theology of Liberation. Thanks to the involvement of the Church in these horrific episodes of the history of the country the Church was seen as 'liberadora' from the oppression and violence and capable to take care of the people and saving them in the most literal sense. See José Aldunate, ed., *Crónicas de Una Iglesia Liberadora*, 1. ed, Colección Sin Norte (Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2000).

²⁰ Hugo Cancino also states the critical role of the Catholic Chilean Church in the process of promoting a democratic culture of consensus and reconciliation. The most important role of the Church after the dictatorship was the search for the truth of thousands of people tortured and assassinated during those seventeen years under the oppression of the military dictatorship. Especially interesting are the conclusions of Hugo Cancino Troncoso, *Chile, Iglesia y Dictadura 1973-1989: Un Estudio Sobre El Rol Político de La Iglesia Católica y*

These two examples demonstrate that the Church is able to understand and address the social context making a huge difference promoting justice, peace and a better life for all. When the Church is tuned into society and when she understands the moral issues that affect the society, she arises as a resource, a prophetic voice, a powerful ally of the people. In the past, when there is mutual understanding and closeness between the Church and the society, Catholic morality has been able to take action and contribute in bringing peace and justice to the society and to suffering people.

In the present, the Church and society seem to be severely disconnected. According to a 2017 study by the Catholic University of Chile, the percentage of people that call themselves Catholic in Chile is about 58%. In 2007, 66% of the population self-identified as Catholic. Thus, the percentage of Catholics in Chile is decreasing at a pace of 1% or 2% per year. The same study shows that among those who called themselves Catholic, those who actively participate in a religious service at least once a week also decreased from 19% in 2006 to 10% in 2017.²¹ Another study also showed that people in Chile are less willing to share their faith with the next generation and are less likely to educate their children in the faith.²² The trust in the Church is diminishing, showing Chile as the country that least trust the Catholic Church in Latin America.²³ Finally, after 2010 the level of trust and confidence

El Conflicto Con El Régimen Militar, 1st ed, Odense University Studies in History and Social Sciences, vol. 201 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997).

²¹ ADIMARK Investigaciones de Mercado y Opinión Pública, and Universidad Católica de Chile, *Encuesta Nacional Bicentenario UC-Adimark* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005), https://encuestabicentenario.uc.cl/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UC-Gfk-ADIMARK_Religio%CC%81n.pdf (accessed March 10, 2018).

²² Alan Cooperman, James Bell and Neha Sahgal, *Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region*, (November 2014). <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2014/11/Religion-in-Latin-America-11-12-PM-full-PDF.pdf> (accessed March 8, 2018)

in Catholic bishops and clergy went down drastically because of the cases of sexual abuse in the Church. The way in which the Conference of Bishops of Chile managed the cases of abuse and the lack of transparency from the Church only made things worst. The level of trust went from 80% in 1996 to 38% in 2011. In Chile, Pope Francis has the lowest approval rating in Latin America due to his lack of attention to cases of sexual abuse. These figures show that the influence of the Church in Chile has drastically decreased, and that the role of the Church in Chilean society has diminished in importance. The distance between Chilean society and the Church has been growing since 1990. In the last 25 years, the relationship between the Church and Chilean society has been fractured. I am suggesting that the main cause of this distance relates to incompatible approaches to moral issues.²⁴ After the dictatorship, the approach of the society focused on the person and emphasized democratic participation by all people in politics. The approach of the Church, in contrast, focused on universal moral principles and particular moral acts, leaving very little room for dialogue and participation, which distanced society from the process of moral decision-making.

The distance between the moral perspective of the Church and the rest of the Chilean society is also particularly clear in current discussions about moral issues. In topics like gender equality, LGBT issues and bioethics, the moral point of view of Chilean society usually differs from the moral point of view of the Catholic Church.²⁵ One example of this

²³ Latinbarometro, *Papa Francisco y la Religión en Chile*, (January 18, 2018).
<http://www.latinobarometro.org/latNewsShow.jsp> (accessed April 14, 2018)

²⁴ Fernando Berrios mentions that “the main factor of religious disaffection is the high proportion of Chileans that consider that is possible to have a morally good life without the help of any church and that is possible to be religious without any religion.” See Fernando Berrios, “Antecedentes y Recepción de Gaudium et Spes en Latinoamérica” in *Teología de Los Signos de los Tiempos*, Colección Teología de Los Tiempos 11 (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2013), 46.

²⁵ LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Some groups would add Q that stands for queer, I for Intersexual and A for asexual. Many groups prefer to add + at the end of the acronym LGBT.

divergence is female leadership. The country elected its first female president in 2006. Mrs. Michelle Bachelet served as president for four years. She was reelected for a second term from 2014 to 2018 with a high percentage of women participating in the elections. The good leadership during her presidency made people wonder about role of women in society and about female leadership. For Catholic people, the female presidency raised the question about the role of women in the Church and the lack of female participation in authority structures. The hierarchy of the Church was not able to see the problem or to address the question, dismissing the concern of the people with arguments based on principles. The many documents of the Conference of Bishops of Chile relating women are strictly related to 'motherhood,' 'family,' and 'service.' There is not mention to women's rights or leadership in any of the documents from the Catholic hierarchy of the Church. After the election of the first female president in the country the message is mainly concern about the family, abortion, private property and reconciliation. There is no mention of the fact that the country elected a woman to lead the country.²⁶

In legislative discussions about topics like reproductive rights, contraception, AIDS, and sexual education, it is possible again to see how the voice of the Chilean society and the voice of the Church diverge. It seems difficult for the Church to keep up with the changes and to embrace the mindset of the people, especially as they embrace their political agency as they guide and serve to democratically recreate their country. The opinion of the hierarchy of the Church seems to be trapped in legalistic language and a deontological approach that

Some groups also propose A for allies. See UC Davis Resource Center, *Get Educated*, (August 2015) <https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/ally-tips.html> (accessed May 10 2018).

²⁶ From 1990 to 2018, there is no mention of female leadership in the official documents of the Catholic Church in Chile. The only topics related to woman are service and family. See more in Conferencia Episcopal de Chile, *Documentos* in <http://documentos.iglesia.cl/documento.php?id=2347> (accessed May 2018).

makes dialogue with the counterparts very difficult. The definitive teaching style of the Church on morality also makes reaching a mutual understanding nearly impossible.

The ethical imperatives and the moral concerns for the future seem to be very different for the Chilean society and the Catholic Church. While the moral concerns of the society are focused on a variety of aspects like poverty, quality of education, corruption, drug trafficking, immigration, depression, obesity, environment, technology, indigenous people; the moral concerns of the Church seem to be just three: abortion, same sex marriage, and divorce. The society is focused on the context, the social reality, the culture and its citizens. The Catholic Church seems to be focused exclusively on preserving moral principles. One approach is open to the future and embracing the challenges of a society in constant change. The other approach fears the changes and has difficulty addressing the current context. The perspective of the Church on moral concerns is conservative and very attached to the law. The perspective of the majority of the Chilean society goes in the opposite direction.²⁷

This state of distance and disagreement does not bode well for the future of the Chilean Catholic community. Unless the Church considers a change to her approach of morality, the distance may lead to further distance between contemporary Chileans and their community of faith. A deontological approach makes dialogue and the exchange of ideas very difficult. The current moral approach is also pessimistic about the future and lacks creativity and kindness.

Jose Comblin explains the and describes the situation of Chile after the dictatorship. Democracy is not able to keep the promises, make the changes or control the economic liberalism. The situation of the Church is described as it follows:

²⁷ Cooperman, Bell and Sahgal, *Religion in Latin America*.

First of all: there is a mass movement: the masses are leaving Catholicism for Pentecostal Protestantism. It is the most important religious movements since the sixteenth century. The Catholic Church is losing the masses almost without realizing the fact and without doing anything about it. It is totally powerless in the face of this mass phenomenon. Shackled by medieval structures, but unwilling and unable to change these structures, the Church looks on passively while its bases disintegrate. The Catholic hierarchy has lost all power of decision.

Rome is fighting against a non-existent modern world and against a communism which died twenty years ago. Rome is fighting to recreate an extreme centralism which is dealing the mortal blow. The new Roman centralism is paralyzing the clergy at the time they most need creativity and freedom.²⁸

For the faithful people of God in Chile the past is not too far. Many Catholics can still remember when faith, morals, and justice were just one coherent thing; they felt proud and honored to belong to the Catholic Church and saw her as a champion for human dignity and respect for freedom. For Chilean Catholics, the distance between their society and their Church, creates a fracture within them between their faith and their morality. Many Catholic people who realize this problem, long for a more comprehensive moral approach and an integrative moral theology from their Church.

Moral Perplexity

The distance between the Chilean society and the Catholic Church is not a problem. Neither is a problem the difficulty of the Church to embrace the cultural context of Chile after 1990. Both examples are just consequences of a real problem for the Church: the state of moral perplexity.²⁹ Perplexity here refers to the effects of an inadequate moral approach

²⁸ José Comblin, "The Church and The Defense of Human Rights" in Enrique D. Dussel and Comisión de Estudios de Historia de la Iglesia en Latinoamérica, eds., *The Church in Latin America, 1492-1992*, A History of the Church in the Third World, v. 1 (Tunbridge Wells, Kent [England] : Maryknoll, N.Y: Burns & Oates ; Orbis Books, 1992), 436.

²⁹ Moral perplexity here is not a decision between two moral options in a moral dilemma. Moral perplexity here refers to the maladjustment of a moral approach that does not match with a society that morally developed after the traumatic experience of dictatorship. A more mature society and morally autonomous people find no help from a moral frame based on rules and principles. See Santurri, Edmund N. *Perplexity in the*

of the Church to embrace the social context and to propose an according morality. This perplexity is a state of paralysis and fear caused by the preeminence of a deontological approach. As a result, Catholic people are under the frame of morality focused on acts, rules and principles. That approach also keeps moral dimension of people disintegrated from the other dimensions of faith and the moral formation that can offer has been reduced to learn moral rules and principles.

A deontological approach is incapable of embracing changes because its focus are rules and principles. Specifically, this approach considers that the moral teachings of the church are unchangeable principles and therefore is very unlikely that a deontological morality could promote, for example, the changes for which the Vatican Council II called. Also, a moral approach focused on principles and rules, is unable to address the social, political, and cultural changes of the Chilean society. Deontological moral theology is not able to “scrutinize the signs of the time” and neither is prepared to understand and contribute to a society undergoing a democratic process as Chile has experienced.³⁰

One of the characteristics of this moral perplexity is that the moral life of the Church tends to be more fearful than faithful. The morality is moved more by fear than by faith. In any moral life people make mistakes, commit morally wrong actions, or break a moral rule. These wrongdoings are not necessarily serious per se, they are serious for their consequences or because of the harm that they provoke. Under the perspective of a deontological approach these events are extremely serious because the center of concern is the moral rule.

Moral Life: Philosophical and Theological Considerations. Studies in Religion and Culture. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987.

³⁰ Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 201.

When the approach of the Church focuses exclusively on rules instead of the person, the morality of the Church becomes a source of fear. The stark polarity between right and wrong promotes an environment of fear in the Church. Within the people of God, there is fear to make mistakes, fear of doing something wrong, fear of dissenting with the moral teaching of the Church, and fear of being excommunicated from the community. In this approach, is very difficult to find much room for faith, or hope and the most common association of Catholic morality is with fear to break a moral rule. The bishops and moral authorities are also captives of that fear. The Conference of Bishop in Chile is afraid of saying something that could compromise their public image or afraid of saying something that could sound morally permissive or liberal. In addition to that, many of the bishops of Chile fear the cultural changes in Chilean society.

In addition of creating a moral life tinted by fear, a moral approach that focuses on rules rather than the person does not address properly the complex layers of being an adult Catholic person today. Human moral life is more complex and richer than the dualistic dynamic of right and wrong, in or out, for or against. The deontological approach tends to oversimplify the moral struggles of the people to black and white situations because it does not have a proper anthropology. The current Catholic morality is insufficient to address these complexities and easily dismisses the shades and layers of honest moral struggles. The oversimplification of moral life has resulted in three kinds of moral responses: people that live their lives in constant guilt for not fulfilling the principles or not following the rules. People that live impeccable moral lives but alienated from other people and with a moral dimension disintegrated from the other dimensions of their selves. Third, people who are in constant moral frustration, going once and again to the confessional without the proper formation and without the proper accompaniment for their moral struggles.

Catholic people under this morality of rules lack of an appropriate formation. The formation that most Catholic have received involves teaching moral rules and providing examples of principles in action through case studies of hypothetical moral dilemmas. A moral pedagogy as such provides no space to consider the context or the subject. This approach does not pay more attention to experience in order to learn from it. Rather, a deontological approach focused on rules, principles, and categorically good actions leaves the learner with a static list of moral universals. Thus, the current Catholic moral formation that the Church offers is decontextualized and impersonal. Is urgent for the Church to offer something more than rules and principles because the moral dimension of the Catholic faith today in Chile is richer and greater than obedience and duty.

The thesis delves into the discussion about contextual moral theology, particularly focusing on the Chilean reality, and suggests a virtues-based approach as an alternative for a more effective Catholic moral theology as well as a virtues-based moral formation. The current state of moral perplexity described could be overcome if a deontological approach is not the exclusive approach of the Church to morality and also if the moral life of the Church is able to face the following challenges.

Challenges for the Future

The Catholic Church in Chile has a great history of helping the country overcome dark times of violence and cultural crisis. In the sixteenth century the Church played an important role in the process of pacification of the indigenous territories. The Church invented a system of political dialogue to facilitate mutual understanding between indigenous chiefs and the Spanish army. The Catholic Church also helped Chile after the independence from the Spanish crown at the beginning of the nineteenth century by establishing schools in

order to educate children and to develop the national identity of the new republic. During the military dictatorship from 1973 to 1989, the Church fearlessly denounced torture and crimes against humanity, joining the fight for human rights. These three extraordinary examples show how the Church's morality, pedagogy, and theology in action can contribute to society. Chile remains as a "Catholic country" because of the moral legacy of the Church's prophetic, political, and reconstructive activities. But in the future, if the Church wants to remain as an influential voice and presence, she must contribute to the urgent needs of Chilean society. Chilean society desperately needs the wisdom and guidance of the Catholic Church because her tradition has already been woven into the social fabric of the country in times of cultural change and moral controversies. In order to continue enriching the life of the Chilean society, the Church has to embrace two specific challenges: to develop an integral moral formation, and to open her morality to an interdisciplinary dialogue with social and behavioral sciences, and developmental psychology.

Another challenge for moral theology and moral formation is the integration of the different dimensions of faith. Catholic morality seems to be isolated in its own realm. The prayer life of Catholic people easily connects with the Sacraments and the community life of the Church. None of them seems very connected with morality. The deontological approach to morality does not help to find connections within the different aspects of faith. A rule-based morality is not very open to integrate different dimensions of the believers. Therefore, the challenge here is to find and develop a moral theology that is able to dialogue with other areas of theology and to propose an approach to morality able to integrate the moral dimension of the Catholic people with the other dimensions of the faith.

Another challenge for Catholic morality is its openness to dialogue. In terms of moral issues in the Chilean society, there is a distance between the point of view of the

hierarchy of the Church and the point of view of the civil society. These different points of view, reveal the different perspectives than the Church and the society are facing their ethical concerns. The distance also reveals a difficulty for the Church to understand the context in the same way than the society does. The deontological moral approach is the main difficulty for the Church to address the context because this approach would primarily appeal to principles rather than experience or data.³¹

In order to serve better the people that the Chilean Church is called to serve, the Church should challenge her moral deontological approach and pay more attention to the context, opening herself to the Spirit of God speaking through the people. In addition to that, the approach of Catholic morality should be more open to the contributions of the social sciences. Psychology, Sociology, History and Behavioral Sciences in Chile have done an amazing job contributing to the self-understanding of the people, the society and the culture, especially during the process of finding its own identity in the last decades after the dictatorship. The approach of these social sciences could also help the Church to improve her teaching, reflection and morality if the Church is open to dialogue with other perspectives and approaches.

The final challenge for moral theology is about moral formation. The current moral formation through instruction of moral principles and analysis of moral dilemmas is not enough. In this case, neither the deontological frame, nor the content of moral rules, satisfies

³¹ One example of the lack of dialogue is the Pastoral Letter on Family, Marriage and Divorce from 2003. The inability to discuss the problem of divorce in the public arena of the congress is expressed in this letter where is possible to find arguments against divorce completely out of reason and that only appeal to authority. The Church defense of the principle of indissolubility of marriage takes several pages in this document and the appealing to God's authority instead of common sense or natural law makes this letter a good example of the lack of understanding and dialogue between the Church and the society. See, Cristián Cordero Caro, *Carta Pastoral Sobre Familia, Matrimonio y Divorcio*, (Puerto Montt, Chile: October 2003) <http://documentos.iglesia.cl/documento.php?id=90> (accessed May 10, 2018)

the moral formation needs of Catholic people. Moral theologians, together with educators and parents, have the responsibility to offer a better moral formation and to develop a better moral education programs for the next generation of Catholics.

The challenge for the future of moral formation is to develop and offer an integrative, contextual, developmental and positive moral formation. An integrative moral formation should integrate, for example, the moral dimension with the other dimensions of faith like prayer, sacraments and community life. A contextual moral formation should always consider the context, the culture and the particular conditions of the person. A developmental moral formation should consider all the different stages, grades and steps of the moral life. A positive and optimistic moral formation, should help people grow in trust, freedom and autonomy instead of oppressing them with guilt, fear and remorse.

The challenge for the future of moral pedagogy is to develop a moral education that goes beyond the memorization of rules and principles, offering some richer content. Moral education should help people to realize who they are and what is the personal calling or vocation to them. Moral education should make people understand human limits, learn about the effect of sin and vice in their lives and also how to learn from mistakes and errors. A proper moral education should make people recognize the presence of good and evil in the world, in the relationships and also on themselves. A good moral education for the future, should teach Catholic people how to pursue good and how to face and fight evil.

Conclusions

In the current state of moral perplexity, the Church is in need of a moral approach able to embrace the context. Chile needs a moral approach that could take account of the socio-political, economic and cultural context of the country. The rich experience of the moral thinking of the Church in Chile, especially terms of social ethics, has been a great and

valuable gift to the society. Since the context has changed and in the current state of moral perplexity, the moral proposal of the Church has to be delivered in a mindful way. In that sense, the Church needs to propose her morality using a relatable approach and an appealing language, trying to avoid authoritarianism and a legalistic approach. Catholic morality should be proposed in terms of a contribution to the people of the country; a contribution within many others to the concert of the ethical life of the Chilean society. The experience and history have shown that the more mindful and contextualized a morality is, the more sense that morality makes to the people.

The Catholic Church in Chile is in need of a moral approach that focuses on the person. The history and the experience of the Church in Chile has shown that when the Church has focused on human life and dignity, her message is stronger, and her apostolate is more effective. Also, experiencing a disintegrating social context, the Church should propose an integrative morality that focuses on the human person as a whole. The Church is in need of a moral proposal that could help people to integrate their lives.

The current state of moral perplexity is in part caused by an inappropriate moral formation or the lack thereof. Looking at the future, the Church is in need of a contextual and integrative moral formation. In every particular time and context, the duty of theologians, moralists, and educators is to think and re-think the best way to propose a Catholic moral life for the people of God in accordance with the gospel and the teachings of the Church. The current moral perplexity is a great opportunity to explore a contextual and integrative pedagogy for moral life. Catholic education has a big role to play in finding pedagogical methodologies and ways to help the Church to provide better moral formation for the Catholics of the future.

II – VIRTUE ETHICS

Introduction

The following chapter will introduce virtue ethics and propose it as better suited for the context described in chapter one. In order to do so, the chapter starts by describing and explaining what virtues are. The main sources on which I will draw include Aristotle, Jean Porter, James Keenan and Joseph Kotva. Each author contributes a unique dimension of virtues that contributes to my argument about how this moral approach focuses deeply on the moral character of the person.

Next, I will tell the story of virtue ethics from Greek antiquity to Alasdair MacIntyre in the twenty first century. I will highlight some of the milestones of this story in order to describe the theory better and to demonstrate how virtue ethics has changed and adapted in different times and cultures. Further, I will present the structure of this moral theory, taking the moral scheme of MacIntyre as the most relevant model to explain contemporary virtue ethics.

Finally, I will present the reasons this approach emerges as the most suitable for moral theology today. The characteristics of virtue ethics and its advantages over deontology, posit this approach as more capable to address the call from the Vatican II and more suitable to address the state of moral perplexity in Chile.

The Quest for Virtue

Virtue ethics is currently “one of three major approaches in normative ethics. It may, initially, be identified as the one that emphasizes the virtues”³² The concept of virtue and the language of virtues are at the center of this ethical approach. Therefore, before describing the theory of virtue ethics, is important to address the question: What is a virtue? Modern virtue ethics usually combines classical and contemporary understandings of virtue. At the end of this part, the summary of all these perspectives will provide for us an overview and a comprehensive understanding of what virtues are. The following contemporary description from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy serves as an initial frame for virtues.

Is an excellent trait of character. It is a disposition, well entrenched in its possessor—something that, as we say, goes all the way down, unlike a habit such as being a tea-drinker—to notice, expect, value, feel, desire, choose, act, and react in certain characteristic ways. To possess a virtue is to be a certain sort of person with a certain complex mindset.³³

A virtue, according to this first description is a trait that some people possess in their character and influence the way of being (noticing, expecting, valuing, feeling, acting) and ultimately determine the sort of person that they are.

Aristotle, provides the most classical description of a virtue. For him a virtue is a “disposition to act righteously in a balanced way, without deficiency neither excess”.³⁴ This definition provides three elements: virtues are dispositions, which for Aristotle means that virtues are natural and intrinsic tendencies or inclinations of the character towards good and

³² Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove, “Virtue Ethics,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/> (accessed April 10, 2018)

³³ Hursthouse and Pettigrove, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

³⁴ Aristotle and J. E. C. Weldon, *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle: Tr. with an Analysis and Critical Notes* (London : New York: Macmillan, limited; The Macmillan company, 1923).

lead human beings righteousness. Secondly, virtues are not external or superficial moral attitudes but internal dispositions of the moral character. Also, according to Aristotle, virtues are related to action and they express the moral character through the practice of those good or righteous actions. Virtues develop through the practice of virtuous actions and also those virtuous actions display the true character. Similarly, the moral character develops through the practice of virtue.³⁵ Finally, the third element from Aristotle is that virtues lead the process of moral discernment through practical reasoning or the exercise of practical wisdom. Virtues are traits, that lead to action through the exercise of moral reasoning. Growing in virtue means growing in the ability choose the desirable middle between two extremes without deficiency neither excess.

Another description of virtues comes from the contemporary author Jean Porter. For her, virtues have three distinctive characteristics: virtues are different than rules; they are related to the cultural context; and virtues are moral habits. In terms of normative ethics, virtues and rules are moral norms because both lead the human morality towards good by normativity.³⁶ However, virtues do not guide the process of moral decision-making in the same way that rules do. In her book *The Recovery of Virtue*, and in dialogue with Stanley Hauerwas, Porter agrees with him in the distinction:

A case in point is provided by the sharp distinction that Hauerwas draws between a theory that sees morality as primarily a matter of virtues, and a theory that emphasizes moral rules instead. In Hauerwas' view, moral rules are precisely defined,

³⁵ There is something very unique here: virtues are traits of character, they are internal dispositions to act in the direction that the virtuous disposition has indicated, but also virtuous or righteous actions develop the moral character and the virtues within it. There is here a co-relation between virtues-actions-character-person. The four elements are connected in virtue ethics theory. If a person does acts of justice in a frequency that could be considered habitual, those acts develop the virtue of justice in her character. After a while, the evidence of possessing the virtue of justice and the many acts of justice, make this person just.

³⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

rigid and apply mostly to quandaries, whereas virtues are not precisely defined, are flexible and apply to the whole of life.³⁷

For Porter, rules are clear and neat; virtues are complex and diffuse. The rules are meant to be followed and obeyed; virtues are meant to dispose the character towards good. Rules are external and impersonal; virtues are intrinsic traits of the character. While rules are better to solve dilemmas and quandaries, virtues seem to be better for an integral morality.

Virtues are related to the context and receive their meaning from the cultural narrative of that context.³⁸ Talking about the influence of narratives in the process of moral formation, Porter says that

Virtue ethics appreciates the role that paradigmatic stories and exemplary figures play in defining particular virtues. Dictionary definitions of virtue are inadequate for two reasons. First, virtues take on a different meaning in various cultural contexts. Courage, for instance, was far more physical and martial in the Athens of Socrates than it is today, where the life of the polis does not depend on citizens holding the battle line against the enemy's charge. The virtue of courage is recast in the Letter to the Ephesians as spiritual resistance to cosmic forces of evil. Second, since virtues are skills, they need examples to show what they mean practically. They have to be displayed concretely[...] We are more likely to learn these lessons from literature than philosophy.³⁹

Thus, a strict definition of virtue could be clear, but lacks the meaning that the cultural narrative of a society could give to it. A virtue could be meaningless and nonsense for a culture if it is out of context.⁴⁰ On the contrary, virtues-in-context make sense to people

³⁷ Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1990). P.105

³⁸ Jean Porter, "Virtue Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, Cambridge Companions to Religion, ed. Robin Gill, (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁹ Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue*, 105.

⁴⁰ Joseph Kotva mentions in *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* that MacIntyre, Roberts and Rorty argue that what count as a virtue is at least partially historically and socially conditioned. Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, 43.

because they can relate and pursue them. In the case of Chilean context, a virtue ethics morality would make sense as far as the virtues have been endorsed by the cultural narrative which gives them meaning. Thanks to this connection between context, cultural narrative and meaning of virtues, Porter also argues that the two most appealing vehicles to teach virtues are storytelling and role models. Pedagogically, stories and heroes compel listeners to emulate or develop qualities, trait, and characteristics, whereas philosophical definitions engage students through abstraction and intellectual assent. A virtues-based moral formation connected to the narratives of local culture would teach virtues and should show examples of contextualized virtuous lives and actions.⁴¹

Finally, Porter agrees with Aristotle, saying virtues are moral habits that develop through practice “over a substantial period of time.”⁴² Virtues are traits of character and dispositions to action but not to one single action. Virtues are similar to musical, gastronomical or artistic skills: they grow and become part of the character through practice, and constant exercise of them. Virtues are related to action and not to a single action, but to practice. That is why Porter insists in the necessity of develop virtue ethics reflection, but always associated to action and practice. “For this reason, we cannot form concepts of particular virtues without some idea of the kinds of actions that correspond to those virtues.”⁴³ Any virtue ethics theory, any virtue-based morality, a pedagogy of virtues or a

⁴¹ About using the language of virtues, is very interesting the work of authors like Mark D. White (*Marvel Comic's Civil War*, and *The Virtues of Capitan America*) and Robert G. Weiner (*Capitan America and the Struggles of the Superhero*) as a local and contemporary attempt to combine virtue ethics reflection, moral formation through virtues and cultural narratives using role models as MARVEL super heroes to impersonate those American virtues that people would like to develop on themselves.

⁴² Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue*, 109.

⁴³ Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue*, 105.

moral formation through them, should consider virtues as traits of character, related to action and also virtues as moral habits which develop through constant practice.

Joseph Kotva offers five generalizations on the nature and the content of virtues. Even when there is a big amount of literature to inspire virtuous life, lists of virtues, reflection about virtues and stories of virtuous people; he recognizes the difficulty to define the nature of virtue.⁴⁴ Kotva says, “although there is little agreement on the exact nature or content of the virtues, I want to offer five generalizations that I believe are widely accepted among the relevant authors.”⁴⁵

The first generalization is that virtues must be understood in relation to the human good, the end, or *telos*. Only through the perspective of the *telos* is possible to see what is detracting from (vices) or contributing to (virtues) the realization of the human good. “The *telos* helps in this way: when we picture the best kind of life for humans to live, we also see the traits, dispositions and capacities that contribute to or detract from that kind of life. The virtues are those states of character that enable or contribute to the realization of the good.”⁴⁶ The lens of the *telos* or human good orients the subject and sets the trajectory for the journey of a life according to the virtues.

Second, Kotva states that the nature of virtues is related to both the intellect and affections.⁴⁷ He says, “various virtues include both the intellectual or rational part of the self

⁴⁴ Kotva mentions on his book how none of the major authors in virtue ethics make lists of virtues. He does not do that, neither MacIntyre, Nussbaum or Sherman provide what they call “exhaustive lists” because makes no sense for certain contexts and they are useless if they are culturally irrelevant. Kotva, *Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, 43.

⁴⁵ Joseph J. Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, Moral Traditions & Moral Arguments (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 23.

⁴⁶ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 23.

⁴⁷ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 24.

and the affective or desiring part of the self. Sometimes a specific virtue is both intellectual and affective. More often, specific virtues deal primarily with the intellect or affective part of the self.”⁴⁸ Any time virtues and the pursuit of good is involved in a moral decision process, both the rational and affective dimensions of the self will be involved. When the practice of virtues is present, it is neither a purely rational nor a purely emotional process. Both the affective and the rational part of the self participate in the moral discernment process of virtue ethics.

Third, Kotva asserts that virtues include a human tendency to behave in a similar way for certain similar circumstances. “That is, a certain continuity marks one’s reactions and concerns in comparable or similar settings.”⁴⁹ For Kotva, the traits of character informed by virtues are many and work together in a coordinated way, especially those related to action and decision-making. “The essential point is the scope of the virtues. They include all those states of character or character traits that influence how we act and choose.”⁵⁰ When virtues are in action, making a moral decision or performing a good action, they work together coordinating a moral response in continuity with the good that they seek.

Fourth, virtues are about continuous traits of character not about capricious sudden changes. Kotva says, “they are relatively stable aspects of one’s character. We do not lose or gain virtues overnight or in a single act... Instead, it is a matter of moral education and growth, of continual practice or neglect, of incremental advancement or decline.”⁵¹ The

⁴⁸ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 24.

⁴⁹ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 24.

⁵⁰ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 24.

⁵¹ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 24.

progressive nature of virtues is especially encouraging for teachers, parents, and educators, because just as virtues take time and patience to mature, so, too, they take significant neglect to wane, making them very unlikely to suddenly disappear. Moral education through virtues is a slow process of formation, growth, practice, and gradual increment in virtuous life. No one becomes virtuous instantly after a single virtuous act; neither does someone becomes vicious after a bad day or a single wrong act because virtues are constant, stable traits of character.

Finally, Kotva demonstrates how virtues are related to intentions. True virtuous actions are expression of good intentions. Kotva states that virtuous actions “must be done ‘for their own sake... that is, performed simply because they are just or courageous actions. They must be ends in themselves... Actions truly expressive of virtues are actions in which the means are prized at least as much as the extrinsic ends to which they are directed.”⁵² For virtue ethics, the criteria of a virtue lays in the underlying motivation informing a moral decision or act. A dishonest or unlawful intention that ends up positively affecting the common good would not qualify as virtuous; neither would it contribute to bettering the person according to virtue ethics.

James Keenan further develops another distinctive characteristic of virtue ethics. He states that virtues are not “things” growing inside of the person, but what human being are. Virtues are expressions of the self. Keenan studies the four cardinal virtues: justice, fidelity, fortitude and prudence. His work engages Paul Laritzen who writes about the narrative of the self and morality.⁵³ The focus in Keenan’s study is the sort of person that people

⁵² Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 25.

become through virtues. He proposes that virtues connect especially with the relational dimension of the self during the process of becoming virtuous because “virtues do not perfect powers or ‘things’ inside of us, but rather ways that we are.”⁵⁴ In other words, virtues perfect or develop the way that humans are in relation to others, the other and to themselves. Virtues for Keenan perfect the relational dimension of the self by developing through virtuous actions the just, faithful, caring and prudent version of oneself.⁵⁵

The way in which Keenan further connects virtue ethics and human relationships is explained in his article *Proposing Cardinal Virtues*.⁵⁶ In that article, he states that the relational dimension of human beings displays the virtues of justice, fidelity and self care.⁵⁷ Keenan introduces these three ways not as levels or parts but as complementary realms of human relationality: general relationality, specific relationality and unique relationality. In this way, each virtue has a call to develop one of these relational dimensions of care. The virtue of justice, for example, has a call to develop our general relational identity. This means that justice and the just actions are expressions of the person who care for the whole general

⁵³ Paul Lauritzen, “The Self and Its Discontents: Recent Work on Morality and the Self,” *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 22/1(Spring 1994): 189-210.

⁵⁴ James Keenan, “Proposing Cardinal Virtues,” *Theological Studies*, 56, (1995), 723.

⁵⁵ Keenan’s perspective on virtues will be mentioned in chapter III. Part of the moral formation through virtues will propose to teach and practice virtues. The original approach of Keenan will be back as an original way of teaching and practicing virtues through establishing and developing relationships.

⁵⁶ As persons, we are relational in three ways: generally, specifically, and uniquely. And each of these relational ways of being demands a cardinal virtue. As a relational being in general, we are called to justice. As a relational being specifically, we are called to fidelity. As a relational being uniquely, we are called to self-care. These three virtues are cardinal. Unlike Thomas’s structure, none is ethically prior to the other; they have equally urgent claims and they should be pursued as ends in themselves. Thus, we are not called to be faithful and self-caring in order to be just, nor are we called to be self-caring and just in order to be faithful. None is auxiliary to the others. Each is a distinctive virtue, none being a subset or subcategory of the others. They are cardinal. The fourth cardinal virtue is prudence, which determines what constitutes the just, faithful, and self-caring way of life for an individual. Keenan, “Proposing Cardinal Virtues,” 723.

⁵⁷ Keenan, “Proposing Cardinal Virtues,” 709-729.

body of relationships in a society. The same happens with specific relationships. Fidelity is also an expression of the relational dimension when caring for specific relationships. Fidelity expresses the care for family, friends and spouses and all those relationships are part of the self and with whom people have built a specific commitment. The virtue of self-care is the expression the relational dimension of the self, caring for the own self.

For Keenan, none of the cardinal virtues is independent from the others; rather, while each one emphasizes a different type of relationship (to ourselves, to the other, and to the others), is not an exclusive, but an integrative call. The fourth cardinal virtue, prudence, is the virtue which integrates the development of other three virtues. Prudence is the virtue which modulates the exercise of practical wisdom, while keeping constant vigilance over the integration process of the virtuous person.⁵⁸

The contribution of Keenan, is an effort to develop an original approach to Christian virtue ethics while in dialogue with social sciences. In his own words, Keenan tries to connect what virtues are and what human persons are called to be through relationships:

Rather than being the last word on virtue, they are among the first word, providing... a skeleton of both what human persons should basically be and what human action should basically aim. Therefore, Christian virtues are not static concepts or “things” that grow inside; rather they are different, interconnected calls to proper relationships.⁵⁹

The focus of Keenan on the virtuous person which become virtuous through building relationships of care and commitments, highlights that humans are relational beings. The Christian moral life according to virtues in this perspective, differs from a self-centered,

⁵⁸ Joseph Kotva also agrees with the special status of the virtue of prudence. He suggests together with Richard Rorty that the virtue of prudence does not identify a single disposition or capacity, but rather an umbrella concept “for a wide range of independent traits.” Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, 43.

⁵⁹ James Keenan and Harrington, *Jesus and Virtue Ethics*, 125.

acts-centered or a sin-centered morality. Following the proposal of Keenan, a virtue ethics morality could be a morality focused on the person but more concern for others and for building relationships of care, rather than a race for individual moral perfection.

In summary, virtues tend to be difficult to define but easy to describe. However, the different approaches and descriptions provided throughout history from Aristotle to Keenan provide a good overview of virtues. Porter says that virtues are “moral habits to develop”⁶⁰ and Keenan states that virtues are expressions of the relational part of the human self.⁶¹ Virtues relate to both the “intellectual as well to the affective”⁶² part of humanity. They are “intrinsically connected” and oriented toward a single “end or *telos*.”⁶³ Because virtues are not “caprices of the moment,” they cannot be acquired in an instant, nor can they be lost in a moment.⁶⁴ A single virtuous or vicious act does not constitute a person as virtuous or vicious. Virtues connect the human moral dimension with an end and also with other people through the relational dimensions of the self. Virtues relate the rational, affective, and practical dimensions of the self. Virtues receive their meaning from the cultural context, and thanks to them the individual moral development is connected to the cultural narrative of the context. Virtues differ significantly from rules, but they work better together in a morality of rules combined with a morality of virtues.⁶⁵ Whether framed as dispositions,

⁶⁰ Porter, *The recovery of Virtue*, 105.

⁶¹ James F. Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1996), 55.

⁶² Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*.

⁶³ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*.

⁶⁴ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*.

⁶⁵ Porter, *The recovery of Virtue*, 105.

traits of character, or parts of the self, virtues are key to understanding the moral dimension of the self and serve as the base for any virtue ethics morality.

What is Virtue Ethics?

The title of the second chapter of *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* by Joseph Kotva raises this question: What is virtue ethics? The author writes, “in contemporary theology and philosophy almost any theory that mentions virtues or human dispositions can be called virtue ethics.”⁶⁶ Virtue ethics is a twenty-five hundred years old ethical theory, developed by multiple authors, who each propose a unique definition. Thus, virtue ethics is far from monolithic. The chapter seeks to draw from the history of the theory to propose three constitutive aspects of all virtue ethics that help to construct a definition: virtue ethics is a normative, teleological ethical theory based on virtues.

First, something obvious but essential to say about virtue ethics is that belongs to the long tradition of ethical philosophy. This branch of philosophy wonders about the good, the sense, the end, and the meaning of human life. As part of ethics, virtue ethics is a reflection on these topics; but it focuses mostly on virtues as its core structure of thinking. At the center of this theory is the idea that humanity pursues good. For virtue ethics, the specific good that humanity pursues are the happiness and human flourishing.

Although modern virtue ethics does not have to take a “neo-Aristotelian” or eudaimonist form, almost any modern version still shows that its roots are in ancient Greek philosophy by the employment of three concepts derived from it. These are *arête* (excellence or virtue), *phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom) and *eudaimonia* (usually translated as happiness or flourishing).⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 16.

⁶⁷ Hursthouse and Pettigrove, “Virtue Ethics.”

Virtue ethics is the reflection on that human journey of pursuing the good while developing a virtuous life. Further, the character of this virtue ethics is teleological, meaning that within its structure, there is a determined end. That end or *telos* has a double function: the end is a magnet and a port. The end in a teleological ethical theory pulls any moral development to itself like a magnet. At the same time the end guides the moral efforts acting as a reference towards all moral development aims.

Jean Porter, at the beginning of her review of virtue ethics for *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics* says that philosophically, virtue ethics “is a process of systematic, critical reflection on the virtues and related topics like character, politics and cultural traditions.”⁶⁸ She says that such reflection emerges in conditions of social change, particularly when received traditions of virtue undergo development and criticism.

In Athenian society circa 350 B.C.E., urban life and cultural changes led to questioning and criticism of heroic virtues like those encoded in Homeric literature. Socrates started the reflection about the virtues of his society and context. After him, his disciple, Plato, continued the reflection about virtues and went further: he agreed with Socrates that virtue consists in knowledge or insight into what was truly good, but he added that this insight can only be attained through “an immediate perception of the forms of beauty, goodness and justice.”⁶⁹ Since then, the reflection about virtues or virtue ethics theory is

⁶⁸ Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 96.

⁶⁹ Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 97.

related not just to the idea of right or wrong but also to the reflection on beauty, goodness, and justice.⁷⁰

After Plato (circa 340 B.C.E.), his disciple Aristotle “did not equate virtue with knowledge *tout court*, but considered it to include appropriate emotional responses as well as correct judgments.”⁷¹ In Aristotelian virtue ethics, virtues are the best understanding of the distinctively human forms of goodness, which is for him “action in accordance with reason, or more specifically, practical wisdom, or, equivalently, virtuous action.”⁷² The analysis of those virtuous actions is a matter of virtue ethics reflection for Aristotle. Aristotelian virtue ethics theory goes further than Plato’s and adds new elements to it. He pays attention to the virtuous action, bringing virtue ethics closer to practical reasoning than theoretical thinking. Within the contributions of Aristotle to virtue ethics, the most important of them is the focus on practical wisdom and the practical dimension of virtues and virtuous life through virtuous actions. “Virtues are stable dispositions leading to reactions and behavior in accordance with a mean as that is determined by practical wisdom.”⁷³ The Aristotelian addition of the importance of the action and the renewed importance of telos allowed his theory to contribute to a teleological morality. Practical wisdom accommodates developments in the process of moral decision-making and moral discernment, which later authors describe as the exercise of moral reasoning through this practical wisdom. The focus

⁷⁰ The ethical reflection has in here an opening to aesthetical reflection. Plato first related *arête* and beauty, and ethics and aesthetics, and it was many years later incorporated in Immanuel Kant’s critique of the pure reason, critique of the practical reason and especially in the critique of the judgement.

⁷¹ Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 98.

⁷² Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 98.

⁷³ Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 98.

on virtuous actions and mean also opens space for future explorations on moral conscience, moral behavior, and developmental psychology.

The origin of the Christian version of virtue ethics is related to the expansion of Christianity through different communities from the Mediterranean culture during the first century. Virtue ethic theory and its language was already present in the Mediterranean culture since year 300 BCE and the Christian communities took the language of virtues to combine it with the doctrine of Christ and the teachings of the early Church. The language of virtues can be found in early Christian texts as an expression of the mixture between language of virtue and the narrative of culture. For instance, Paul mentions virtues in the letter to the Galatians as character traits that are particularly appropriate to Christian life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.⁷⁴ Paul proposes them as expressions of God and the fruits of the Spirit of God in Christian people who live according to the gospel. In this early letter, Paul takes the language of virtue ethics theory and propose virtues in a new way: as fruits of the Spirit. This combination of faith, spirituality and virtue ethics was unique and original, and started a virtue ethics reflection from the perspective of Christian faith for Christian communities.

Early Christian communities all over the Mediterranean took this reflection and developed a moral structure and a Christian morality based on virtues. The emerging morality combined virtues, ethical life, spiritual life, and faith. That reflection would continue developing throughout the centuries, until today.

In different centuries, authors like Augustine of Hippo (354-430), John Cassian (360-435), Gregory the Great (540-604), Peter Abelard (1074-1142), and Peter Lombard (1100-

⁷⁴ Galatians 5:22-23.

1160) developed different reflections on Christian virtues and virtue-based morality.⁷⁵ A milestone in this historical development of virtue ethics is Thomas Aquinas's (1225-1274) reflections on virtues in *pars prima secundae* of his *Summa Theologicae*. His reflection on Christian virtue ethics became one of the most authoritative theories in Christian ethics. For the context of Aquinas, Christianity was part of the culture and the work of Aquinas was to bring virtue ethics from Aristotle together with the theology of that time to develop an original virtue ethics theory in the thirteenth century.

To the Aristotelian description of virtue, Aquinas adds the element of divine grace and God. When he describes what is a virtue, he says that is “a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously.”⁷⁶ That description is the synthesis of ethical ideas of virtue and the theological concepts available at his time. The definition of virtue proposed by Aquinas built on the definition provided by Peter Abelard and Augustine. While Aquinas continuing the tradition of Abelard, he also updated the theory of virtue ethics by introducing the distinction between infused and acquired virtues. Infused virtues have union with God as their direct or indirect aim, while acquired virtues are directed towards the attainment of the human good as discerned by reason.⁷⁷ Aquinas's ethical frame of infused and acquired virtues became the authoritative ethical paradigm of the thirteenth century and has continued to hold preeminence in Christian virtue theory for more than five hundred years.

During modern times, together with the cultural changes brought by the Enlightenment, Modernity developed its own ethical thinking separated from Christian faith.

⁷⁵ Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 100.

⁷⁶ Thomas and Anton C. Pegis, *Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, The Modern Library of the World's Best Books (New York: Modern Library, 1948), 562.

⁷⁷ Porter, “Virtue Ethics,” 102.

In order to serve the cultural and philosophical project of the Enlightenment, there was a distance between philosophy and Christian faith. The rationalistic project of modernity separated the theological and religious fundamentals of Christian virtue ethics to develop more universal ethics. For centuries, ethics remained apart from faith and developing its own theories around the concepts of justice and law. Moral theology, on the other hand, developed by focusing more in principles and moral rules, and proposing a morality focused on wrongful actions and sin, which led also to focus more on the sacrament of penance.⁷⁸

In the 1980s, Alasdair MacIntyre renewed an interest in virtue ethics and reintegrated ethics and theology. In his book *After Virtue*, MacIntyre denounced the failure of the project of modernism and pleaded for a recovery of the institutions and the classical humanities.⁷⁹ He rejected the self-centered philosophical thinking of modernity and blamed the Enlightenment for the selfishness and disintegration of contemporary society. The quest for a new ethical frame for the post-modern context finds in the reflection of MacIntyre a hope to develop a more integrating and contextual ethical thinking that could be more suitable for the more complex societies of the future.

James Keenan highlights the deep connection between virtue ethics and the daily moral struggles of people in their every-day moral experiences. “I did not see the virtues as ideas, but as practices. Thus, I turned to familiar stories”⁸⁰ For this author, virtue ethics can go to the common ground of human life and cultural narratives of the tradition because is

⁷⁸ John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*, The Martin D’Arcy Memorial Lectures 1981–2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

⁷⁹ Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 51-61.

⁸⁰ Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians*, vii.

related to practical thinking and moral human experiences. Keenan proposes virtue ethics as a more suitable theory to address the moral life of the people today.

I wanted to address not curious Christians but thinking ones. I wanted to communicate with somebody interested not in whatever contemporary topic was dividing the Church, but rather in what could be foundational for our family and community lives. I wanted to find a common ground. Moreover, rather than looking to principles or rules that govern some particular and specific complex actions, I wanted to look at ordinary life. To do that, I turned to virtues.⁸¹

Virtues, because of their connection in different levels with human life, values and moral experiences that go beyond ethics, has a great opportunity to offer a moral frame for contemporary society.

During the last decades there has been a strong revival of virtue ethics in ethical circles, especially in North America.⁸² Authors like Alasdair MacIntyre, Philippa Foot, Jean Porter, James Keenan and Joseph Kotva have developed virtue ethics and enriched this theory by doing the effort to adapt and update this moral thinking to the current time and context. From various perspectives and with different accents, these authors have done the work of rethinking virtue ethics theory for the twentieth century. Some of them have paid attention to the teleological aspect; others have focused in the meaning of virtues or the possible dialogues with biblical studies or social ethics. The revival of virtue ethics is promising for Catholic moral theology for many reasons. First, it opens up the conversation about ethics beyond a rule-based framework. Second, as a paradigm for the complexity of the twenty-first century, this ethical theory offers an opportunity to re-think, develop, and

⁸¹ Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians*, vii.

⁸² Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 5.

teach a virtue ethics morality that can dialogue with culture and adapt to contemporary crises and values.

Jean Porter said that virtue ethics theory does not have a monolithic and defined structure of thinking because different authors have reflected on virtues in different contexts, from different approaches and with different focuses. Every model of virtue ethics defines virtue differently and uniquely describes the role of ethics in moral life.

Contemporary authors base their reflections and perspectives in the model for virtue ethics from Alasdair MacIntyre. He proposes a model for virtue ethics that contains an anthropology, an end and a role for ethics. The trigger of his reflection is the failure of the modern project of Enlightenment and his effort is to propose a more complete and integral moral frame for the twenty first century.

The main argument of MacIntyre is that the failure of the modern rationalistic project and the atomization of our current post-modern culture have to do with the moral structure of the enlightenment. The cause of the failure, according to him, is the dichotomy between the moral precepts that structured the moral modern project, and the anthropology underneath. The modern anthropology is based on classical Greek thinking but one element of that anthropology was taken away: human teleology.⁸³ MacIntyre would argue that if the precepts of human nature and moral structure were taken from classical thinking, both should have kept the essential aspect of *telos*. Modern morality separated the teleological aspect of those precepts in order to focus in the human being and the present. The loss of teleology in the modern moral project was the sentence to failure, and a consequence of that was the atomization of the culture and the rule of sentimentalism. Instead of preserving a

⁸³ Charles E. Curran and Lisa Fullam, eds., *Virtue*, Readings in Moral Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 2011), 23.

unifying concept for humanity as *telos*, modernity dismissed and derived in endless, individualistic self-centered pursuits of different human ends according to personal preferences and governed by a “certain abstract and ghostly character.”⁸⁴ MacIntyre suggests that in order to develop any moral project, is absolutely necessary appeal to history as the proper lens to see human reality. In this way, is possible to avoid the mistakes than the modern moral project committed and recover the truly conception of norms and human nature:

I want to argue that any project of this form was bound to fail, because of an eradicable discrepancy between their shared conception of moral rules and precepts on one hand and what was shared – despite much longer divergences – in their conception of human nature on the other. Both conceptions have a history and their relationship can only be made intelligible in the light of that history.⁸⁵

The moral scheme that MacIntyre develops contains the Aristotelian structure taken from the Nicomachean Ethics combined with also classical theistic elements. The basic moral model described in *After Virtue* consists in three elements: an untutored human nature, a teleological human nature and the ethical norms that makes humanity transit from the first nature to the final one. In this scheme, the role of ethics is to enable humans to understand the essence of their nature and while doing that, help the transition from the former state of “*man-as-he-happens-to-be* (untutored human nature) towards the state of *man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature*.”⁸⁶ (teleological human nature). MacIntyre has a role for ethics and a clear idea of *telos*. He also explains *in extense* this moral scheme. The

⁸⁴ Curran and Fullam, eds., *Virtue*, 23.

⁸⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

⁸⁶ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

following paragraphs will highlight four important element this moral scheme:

interconnection of the elements of the model, the moral anthropology underneath, the importance of *telos*, and the tutoring role of virtues.

It is very important to mention that in the moral scheme of MacIntyre, none of the elements can be separated from the others. The complexity of this multidimensional scheme can be problematic, but its elements should never be separated. On the contrary, the moral scheme works when it helps to articulate these two moral states together with virtues and ethics. The entire developmental process from the raw initial (untutored) human nature to the teleological (virtuous) human being should be considered as a whole. This idea of necessary interconnection of anthropology, *telos* and ethics, comes from MacIntyre reflection on the current post-modern society. For him, part of the failure of the Enlightenment project has to do with the obsession for dichotomy, dissection and distinction. MacIntyre's model, being a postmodern model, requires and promotes dialogue instead of dichotomies, and integration of theories instead of distinctions.

The anthropology in the moral scheme of MacIntyre is briefly mentioned as "some account of man as a rational animal" but he does not go beyond that. The center of the concerns of MacIntyre is the role of ethics and specifically the role of ethics helping humans become the best version of themselves. The second mention about human nature is derived from the possibility to receive a proper education in virtues. MacIntyre says "the desires and emotions which we possess are to put in order and educated by the use of such precepts and by the cultivation of those habits of action which the study of ethics prescribes." Therefore

the second characteristic of MacIntyre's anthropology is that the human nature possesses desires and emotions and those are able to be tutored and educated.⁸⁷

This moral scheme includes the end or *telos* as the goal of any human development, individual or social. The aspiration of this model is to reach the *man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature*⁸⁸ as the end and goal. In order to reach that state of human fulfillment and for the society to thrive towards that *telos* of prosperity, this teleological moral theory proposes human flourishing as a goal. That teleological moral frame could be very appealing for a generation disenchanted of any social project. For the Church in Chile and her state of moral perplexity, a moral proposal that offers human flourishing and fulfillment, virtue ethics could be an attractive and very appealing moral approach for those who seek for something more than moral rules to follow.

Finally, according to this model for virtue ethics, the process of moral development is guided by the virtues in a way that they act as normative units for moral formation. MacIntyre says that virtues tutor the process of becoming the virtuous nature that is meant to be. In this sense, this approach is normative in terms of offering specific norms which will guide for moral behavior and tutor the moral development through virtues. For MacIntyre, virtues tutor the moral subject from the initial moral state to the virtuous one intrinsically. Virtues develop within the moral character of the person and because of this, they are not some kind of external "things" norming the character, but traits of the moral dimension of the person.

⁸⁷ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

⁸⁸ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

The moral scheme of MacIntyre as an ethical matrix for Catholic morality is worth of a try. This moral scheme is tuned with the complexity of the current cultural time and context, offers a matrix of thinking perfectly combinable with the faith and social teachings of the Church and has an anthropology that is rich and meaningful for the current culture. If the Church opts for a virtue ethics approach, she would be improving her morality having a more suitable moral model for Catholic morality. That approach might be multidimensional and more complex than a deontological morality but also a more complex and multidimensional moral theory could be a richer moral proposal for the postmodern society and to postmodern Catholics, which is in fact are more complex and multidimensional than they used to be. Virtue ethics seems to respond better to the context, to the humanity and to the moral complexities of the contemporary world.

Virtue Ethics as a Morality

Virtue ethics as a theory is a reflection about virtues. Virtue ethics as a morality is a proposal to live according to the virtues. But how does that happen? The process of becoming a virtuous person or becoming a virtuous society is related to appropriation, growth, and practice. These three elements are the key to understanding how virtue ethics works as a morality.

The triple moral scheme of MacIntyre contains a starting state of humanity, which is described as raw and untutored human nature. In this scheme, the role of ethics is to tutor and guide that human nature to reach the virtuous state, which is described by MacIntyre as “*man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature*.”⁸⁹ This process of realizing that essential nature and understanding the meaning of human existence is the element of appropriation.

⁸⁹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

The moral development through virtues would gradually reveal that essential nature and the process of becoming virtues would have that element of embracing the most essential human nature, with particular tendencies, traits and virtues each one is called to develop.

The second element of moral development related to virtue ethics is growth. The virtue ethics morality promotes constant growth in the direction of the end, which is the teleological orientation of this theory. Virtue ethics also promotes a non-teleological growth, which is the balance or *sophrosyne* between the extremes. Both elements of growth, the development towards the end and the development of happiness and balance, are part of the dynamic of moral development through virtues.

Finally, the third key element of moral development is practice. Since virtues are stable traits of character, the process of becoming virtuous takes time, patience, and practice. Just as an athlete practicing a sport or an artist playing a musical instrument must have constancy in training, moral persons must also develop certain skills. The workshop to acquire the virtues is the moral dimension of daily life. Every time a person makes a moral decision, she becomes more adept at choosing, evaluating, practicing, and trying to be better than yesterday. The process of becoming virtuous takes a lifetime of practice.

This element of practice is very useful to apply virtue ethics to the realm of education and moral formation. The main invitation is to try and try again. There will indefinitely be mistakes and errors, but these are just part of the journey, part of process of becoming better people. In addition to expecting mistakes, this moral approach makes room for learning from those mistakes, utilizing shortcoming in wisdom, prudence, or other virtues as an opportunity to develop deeper mercy, forgiveness, personal awareness, and social commitment.

The characteristics of virtue ethics have advantages to address the current moral perplexity of the Catholic people in Chile and also to develop a model for Catholic moral education. The possibilities are many, but this is just the beginning of a conversation about virtue ethics and moral formation. The discussion and reflection about the developmental process will be back again in chapter three when virtue ethics will be proposed as a suitable moral approach for moral education in the context of Chile.

Virtue Ethics Is the Best Suited Approach for the Current Time and Context

In the last decades, virtue ethics has emerged as an attractive moral frame to face the social and moral struggles of today. Christian and non-Christian moralities have found in virtue ethics certain elements that make it especially able to address and embrace the complex world of today. The complexities of the cultural, political, ethical, and social realms of the current reality require an ethical frame able to embrace it like it is, without oversimplifying it. The Catholic Church is part of that complex contemporary reality, and she could benefit from an ethical approach like this, especially thinking about the next generation of Catholics. Virtue ethics seems to be an excellent frame for moral theology, a great perspective to propose the morality of the Church, and a suitable approach for Catholic moral formation. The following six characteristics of virtue ethics will demonstrate why this approach is the best suited to deal with the contemporary complexities in moral formation.

First, virtue ethics pays less attention to rules, principles, and moral acts, in order to focus on the human person, the moral character, and the thriving process of becoming better people. Kotva writes:

Since the eighteenth century, ethical theory has usually focused on rules, principles, goods, and step-by-step decision-making procedures for resolving moral quandaries. Modern ethical theory has thus concentrated on developing rules, principles and

exact methods for determining the moral status of specific acts. In contrast, virtue ethics is more agent-centered and less concerned with the analysis of problematic situations. Virtue ethics moves the focus away from specific acts to “background” issues such as the character traits, personal commitments, community, traditions. And the conditions necessary for human excellence and flourishing. Virtue ethics thus involves a radical shift in the focus of ethical reflection.⁹⁰

According to Kotva, the change of the focus from rules to “background issues” makes this moral approach more appealing for the current post-modern culture of the society and the Church. After seventeen years of dictatorship, Chilean society is definitely not focused on rules. Rather, Chileans find themselves more concerned about developing conditions for human excellence, flourishing, and national happiness. The Catholic Church after the Vatican II is not called to be focused on principles but on the person of Jesus Christ and his people. Education in the twenty-first century is also less focused on teaching principles and rules and more concern about forming the person. Virtue ethics, because of its focus, is a more suitable approach for Catholic moral formation in Chile today.

Second, virtue ethics proposes a moral life in constant development of the person, in continuous growth of the self, and deployment of the moral traits of the human character. During the course of a virtuous life, the person, the community, or the society are in constant seek for a balanced life and the human good, avoiding the extremes. This developmental aspect also allows a comprehensive and slow process of growth of the moral subject. Virtue ethics is far from the divisive paradigms of black and white, right and wrong, or lawful and unlawful. Thus, it is a better approach to address the contemporary moral struggles. The developmental aspect of virtue ethics also sets a positive moral frame that invites everyone to grow and to be better every day. The moral formation of the Church in Chile needs an optimistic moral approach with this sense of developmental change.

⁹⁰ Kotva, *Case for Virtue Ethics*, 5.

The teleological frame of virtue ethics is the third characteristic that makes this approach very suitable for Catholic moral formation today. The instantaneity of our culture and the focus on the present makes practically impossible to see beyond the immanency of here and now. The virtue ethics approach can help people to see “the bigger picture” by orienting them to the *telos*. The teleological frame of virtue ethics by setting the end, could connect the moral journey towards that good with the Christian idea of pilgrimage and hope. The teleological character of virtue ethics sets a frame where the good constitute the end of the moral life and the hopeful pursue of good constitute the moral pilgrimage for the Christian life.

Virtue ethics also has its own language which makes this morality particularly relatable to contemporary culture. The grammar of virtues goes beyond the simple categories of ethics and morality. People can use literature, spirituality, sports, crafts, arts, and politics to develop a compelling virtue ethics theory in their particular context. The humanities have used the language of virtues and excellence to relate ethics and aesthetics because the richness of the language of virtue is rich and complex enough to embrace the richness and complexity of humanity. The advantage of using virtue ethics as the frame for moral formation in the Catholic Church is that the language of virtues could help to relate and connect that moral formation with other areas of formation. By using virtues like “justice” “love”, “hope” and “humility” for moral education, it might be easier to find connections between ethics and the Bible, morality and spirituality, morality and spiritual discernment. The flexible ethical frame of this moral approach gives the opportunity to relate the moral dimension of life not just with the rational but also with the religious, social, political, spiritual, physical and affective dimensions of human life. The virtue ethics approach could help to understand better and in a more integrated way what is to be a human being today.

Virtue ethics is not a monolithically structured ethical theory that works independently from the context. It offers a tripartite model of anthropology, end, and virtues, but it does not provide a dictionary definition of what is that human nature, what are virtues and what is the end of the moral life. The model of virtue ethics does not provide those specifics because it has to be contextualized to the reality. In this sense, virtue ethics from Aquinas is different than the virtue ethics model of MacIntyre. Virtue ethics is a moral frame that needs to be develop and has to be contextualize every time. In order to serve as the vehicle for the moral teachings of the Church, virtue ethics has been updated in different times and adapted to serve the moral context of different Catholic communities. Today, it is the responsibility of the Catholic moral theologians to update, adapt, and contextualize virtue ethics to the current time and to specific contexts. The necessary contextualization of virtue ethics is another good reason to consider this approach as better suited for moral formation in the context of Chilean Catholic education.

One of the characteristics of virtue ethics is its openness to dialogue. Different from a moral frame focused on moral rules and principles, this approach is open to interactions and synergies. As an ethical frame for moral education, virtue ethics could be open to the dialogue with pedagogy, education, sociology, developmental psychology and behavioral sciences. The openness of virtue ethics theory allows the exchange of ideas and dialogue for mutual benefit. Virtue ethics as Catholic moral formation and moral theology reflection, could be open to the dialogue with other areas of theology like Spirituality, Christology, Biblical studies and Sacraments. A morality based on virtue ethics could be enriched by the findings of the behavioral sciences and psychology on conscience. A moral life lived

according to the virtues, could explore, for example, the possibilities that relate spiritual discernment and moral discernment.⁹¹

Finally, virtue ethics are deeply related to the practical world and practice. Thanks to this element of this approach the moral formation in Catholic education could consider the virtue ethics formation beyond the classroom. In this perspective no everything is theoretical, not everything is classroom learning. Virtue ethics considers the human nature as a complex and rich compound of at least four dimensions: moral, spiritual, rational and physical. Together with the relatable language of virtues, the multidimensionality of this perspective could promote a more integral formation. Therefore, the moral formation could be given through the classes of moral formation, but also through service immersion trips, camps, civic participation, family life, sports, movies, books, practice of an instrument or baking. Any opportunity to grow in virtues through practice is an opportunity to morally grow and learn. From the perspective of virtue ethics, any practice and opportunity of do better becomes a contribution to the moral formation of the person as a whole.

Conclusions

Virtue ethics, thanks to its remarkable characteristics, offers a more suitable moral approach than deontological ethics for the Catholic Church in Chile. Instead of focusing in moral rules, virtue ethics focuses on the moral character of the person. Instead of proposing decontextualized moral principles, virtue ethics invites to practice virtues in the common

⁹¹ Ignatian spirituality and virtue ethics. The need for self-examination, life as an ongoing task, exercises and practice, a prudent director, an appreciation for human feelings and a vision of the end are some of the characteristics that Ignatian Spirituality and virtue ethics have in common. James Keenan, "Strange Bedfellows" *The Way Supplement*, (Spring 1997).

ground of daily moral life. With virtue ethics, the Church has a more suitable moral approach to propose her moral teachings to the people in Chile today. A virtue ethics approach could help Catholics in Chile to overcome the state of moral perplexity by offering an alternative approach, less rule-based and more optimistic about the positive development of the moral dimension of life.

Virtue ethics also expands the possibilities for moral theology and Catholic morality to explore dialogues and interactions with Spirituality, Scriptures and Sacraments. The model of virtue ethics and the language of virtues are flexible and relatable enough to promote those interactions. In the same way, if the Church is able to propose a virtue ethics morality instead of a deontological morality, she would be offering to the people of God a richer moral life and a morality more integrated with the other dimensions of their faith.

The ethical frame of virtue ethics is more capable to respond to the call from Vatican Council II to “perfect moral theology” because can be nourished by the teachings of the Bible and by the daily moral experiences of people. Also, the developmental character of virtue ethics is more capable to “shed light on the loftiness of the calling of the faithful in Christ and the obligation that is theirs of bearing fruit in charity for the life of the world.”⁹² Virtue ethics, thanks to its characteristics, has more possibilities to invite the people of God to pursue the vocation and the responsibility of spreading the spirit of Christ throughout the world.⁹³

⁹² Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 452.

⁹³ Gaudium et Spes explicitly invites Catholic people to live their lives according to the virtues: “In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.” Abbott and Gallagher, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 58.

Finally, virtue ethics is a more suitable approach for the state of moral perplexity described in chapter one because it is capable to address the social context. Virtue ethics, different than a deontological ethics, is able to embrace the social and cultural changes the Chilean society has undergone after the dictatorship. Through virtue ethics, the Church can offer Chilean Catholics a contextualized and meaningful morality that understands and acknowledges the ethical mindset of the society.

III – MORAL FORMATION

Introduction

As I argued in chapter one, a deontological approach to morality is incapable to address the cultural changes of Chilean society. A moral approach based on unchangeable moral principles cannot adequately respond to the call of Vatican II to develop moral theology in a contextual way. The second chapter of this thesis addressed the problem by proposing virtue ethics as a better suited approach as the moral paradigm for the Church in Chile. This final chapter will address the necessity for a moral formation to go along with virtue ethics morality. This chapter aims to imagine how a moral formation through virtue ethics would complement the religious formation in the context of Catholic education in Chile. This proposal will suggest a few key elements to consider virtue ethics as the proper framework for moral formation.

This pedagogical design will focus on Jesuit education in Chile. Though the scope of Jesuit education may seem too limited to address the widespread needs of a Chilean contextualized moral theology, my research hones in on a concrete and contextual application of virtue ethics within the realm of my own ministerial calling and life. I know firsthand that Chilean Jesuits need an alternative to deontological moral formation to form the moral dimension of the students of the Ignatian schools. Thus this thesis responds to the call from the Vatican II to explore and develop moral theology in a way that is more adequate to my own time and context.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Abbott and Gallagher, *Documents of Vatican II*, 452.

This last chapter does not offer an exhaustive final word on virtue ethics formation. Rather it offers an invitation to dialogue about contextual moral education and the responsibility of moral theologians, educators, and parents for the formation of the Catholic people of the future. Hopefully, this work will provide insights to begin articulating a reflection on virtue ethics formation and pedagogy. Further, it may encourage or inspire the application of virtue ethics formation beyond Catholic schools.

This chapter will start by describing the context of the Jesuit education in Chile and its model of multidimensional religious formation. Jesuit schools provide a combination of theological, sacramental, and spiritual formation but these schools lack of a proper, contextual paradigm for moral formation because of the moral perplexity described in chapter one.

Finally, building on chapter two, I will suggest a few key elements for a virtue ethics moral formation that can be done in combination with spiritual, sacramental and faith formation. According to the model of virtue ethics, such formation should do three things: set the end in God, teach culturally meaningful virtues rooted in the Catholic tradition, and develop moral habits.

Ignatian Schools in Chile

The Jesuits arrived in Chile in 1593 with the mission to evangelize the Spanish territories south of Peru. The presence of the Jesuits and their work was critical to the expansion of the Catholic faith throughout the southern territories of the Spanish crown. They helped to create a religious-cultural mixture by combining the spiritual symbolism of those territories with the traditional devotions from Spain. The pastoral sensibility of the Jesuits, particularly their acknowledgement of and respect for the cultural differences

between Spaniard and indigenous cultures, helped them to develop a type of inculturated evangelization. In the sixteenth century, the Jesuits created schools for the education of the elite in the southern colony. Jesuit schools educated the children of the aristocratic Spaniard families together with the children of the indigenous chiefs, in order to promote Catholic faith, dialogue, and peace for future generations.⁹⁵ Sadly, all these missionary efforts, educational enterprises, and dialogue initiatives were frustrated by the expulsion of the Jesuits from all the Spanish territories in 1767 by order of Charles III of Spain. Fourteen years later, the Church suppressed the Society of Jesus in the whole world, by the brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* disseminated on July 21st of 1773.

The Jesuits returned to Chile after the restoration of the Society of Jesus in 1814 by Pope Pius VII. In this second missionary journey, the Jesuits established a different mission because the political context had changed dramatically.⁹⁶ They founded four different parish churches with associated Catholic school in the four most important Chilean cities: Puerto Montt, Concepcion, Valparaiso, and the capital city, Santiago. The new wave of Jesuits aimed to develop a double apostolate: Churches for the formation of faith, devotion, and celebration of the sacraments, and Jesuit schools to provide high quality Catholic education for the early republic of Chile.

The Jesuit mission to educate and form the next generation of Catholic people continues to this day. Ignatian spirituality and Ignatian pedagogy is organized in Chile through a network of schools all over the country.⁹⁷ The pedagogical paradigm of these

⁹⁵ Gabriel Guarda, *La Edad Media de Chile: Historia de La Iglesia Desde La Fundación de Santiago a La Incorporación de Chiloé 1541-1826*, Colección Arte y Cultura (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones UC, 2016).

⁹⁶ The process of emancipation from the European crown started on September 18th of 1810. After several battles, Chile declared its Independence from Spain on January 1st, 1818. The Holy See recognized Chile as an independent Republic on April 13th of 1840.

schools comes from the spirituality of the Society of Jesus. The Ignatian pedagogy in these schools is also adapted and contextualized to the reality and needs of the Church in Chile. These Ignatian schools have been providing Chile excellent Catholic education for decades. The influence of this Ignatian education and religious formation is highly relevant for the country because the people educated by the Jesuits have been contributing to the cultural, political and religious life of Chile since the seventeenth century. The influence of the Ignatian education will continue contributing to the future of country and the future of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Ignatian Education

The current model of Ignatian education in Chile aims to provide an integrative education focused on the person that combines academic, physical, spiritual, artistic, and religious formation. The pedagogical philosophy pictures the student as a whole person in a process of formation and development. Over twelve years of school, the Ignatian curriculum of provides a rich Catholic education for girls and boys. This twelve year span of formation gives educators an extraordinary opportunity to offer high quality academics integrated with Catholic faith and Ignatian spirituality.

⁹⁷ Hereafter I will use the term “Ignatian education” or “Ignatian school” instead of “Jesuit education” or “Jesuit school” because what gives identity and meaning to these particular institutions and also a unique pedagogy is the shared Ignatian Spirituality and not necessarily the presence the Jesuits in these institutions. The official document from the Society of Jesus about Ignatian Pedagogy mentions: “We call this document Ignatian Pedagogy since it is intended not only for formal education provided in Jesuit schools, colleges and universities, but it can be helpful in every form of educational service that in one way or other is inspired by the experience of St. Ignatius recorded in the Spiritual Exercises, in Part IV of the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, and in the Jesuit Ratio Studiorum.” See *Ignatian Pedagogy, A Practical Approach*, (1993) http://www.sjweb.info/documents/education/pedagogy_en.pdf (accessed May 10 2018).

Ignatian schools provide religious formation through classes and pastoral activities. All the schools have an academic Department of Religion and Theology that prepares the content for the lectures on religion and plans the classes at each level. The program spans the twelve years of education and is able to cover many subjects within basic theology and religious studies. Some of these subjects include biblical studies, sacraments, liturgy, history of the Church, christology, creation, eschatology, and study of the documents of the Magisterium, Second Vatican Council, and Social Doctrine of the Church. In this model of education there is an explicit effort to connect theology and religious formation with all the other subjects and disciplines of the school. The aim of the religious formation in these schools is to contribute to the multidimensional formation of the students. Therefore, the Department of Religion and Theology tries also to integrate the content of classes with all the pastoral activities of the school.

In addition to the theology classes, each school has also a Department of Campus Ministry that organizes all the pastoral activities that complements the formation of the students. The pastoral activities are all the “out-of-the-classroom” experiences and services that provide a practical experience of faith for the students. These activities contribute to the practice of the ministerial, sacramental, and religious formation of the students by offering them experiences of immersion, celebration, and reflection on their faith. Some of those pastoral activities include visits (to the local parishes and hospitals, visits to the cathedral, trips to the nature or national parks, service immersion trips in poor neighborhoods), talks (meeting the bishop, talking to parents about lay spirituality), and the celebration of the sacraments in the school. During the summer there are more extensive pastoral activities like hikes to explore their spirituality, missions, and camps to deepen the religious formation and faith. Some of the students also participate in specific groups like Boys and Girls Scouts,

CLC (Christian Life Communities), and other youth groups that meet after school and on weekends.

These pastoral activities offer students practical experiences to connect their classroom learning with their reality and context. Pastoral formation in the schools aims to help students realize that their faith goes beyond theory and that their life of faith should be experienced in real life, in the encounter with others, in the sacraments, and beyond the limits of the classroom.

One of the most precious learnings that the students receive from this Ignatian pastoral formation is the Spiritual examen. All the students learn to do the Ignatian examen, which is a very useful pastoral resource for quotidian discernment. This discernment prayer is especially useful for the students to reflect at the end of the pastoral activities provided by the curriculum of the school. Further, the Ignatian examen helps students to recognize the presence of God in the people, places, and experiences that they encounter in school, in mission, and in their home lives. Practiced at the end of the day or at the end of a pastoral activity, the Ignatian examen slowly develops a lifelong habit for students to make space for discernment, listening, prayer, and theological reflection. Ignatian pastoral formation helps students to develop pastoral and ministerial skills, but it also intends to shape students' lives by fostering a spirit of discernment. At the end of their formation years, they will be able to understand that God is always present and working in their lives and that they are called to collaborate with Christ through a ministry of joy and mercy.

Ignatian Schools provide sacramental formation through classes and programs of preparation for first communion and confirmation. The Conference of Catholic Chilean Bishops allows and encourages all Catholic schools to celebrate the sacraments of the Church in the schools as part of the identity of a Catholic education. The objective of this is

to form in sacraments and to develop a sacramental life which is a dimension of the life of faith of the entire educative community. All Ignatian schools offer programs of preparation for first communion for the students in third grade. There are also preparations and celebrations of baptism and marriage. They also provide an excellent program to prepare the students during high school to receive the sacrament of confirmation. There is a high participation of lay people in the sacramental formation of the students. The families who have children attending the schools take on the responsibility of catechesis for their own children, joining the Jesuits and teachers in the sacramental formation of their daughters and sons.

In practical terms, the school offers daily mass for everyone in the school, Saturday evening mass for students and their families, and two Sunday masses for the whole community. During the school year, there are also celebrations of mass with participation of all the students, staff, and teachers. The entire school community participates in these big Eucharistic celebrations. Some examples of these celebrations are the mass of the Holy Spirit, all members of the school community initiate the academic year. Further, at the feast of Saint Ignatius and the feast of Saint Alberto Hurtado and during Lent, Holy Week, Advent and Christmas, students, teachers, staff and families come together to observe the liturgy that is integrated as part of the curriculum and life of the community. The Office of Campus Ministry also makes available the sacrament of reconciliation at any time, but specially during Lent and Advent. The Ignatian schools introduce the students to the sacramental life of the Church through the participation and celebration of the sacraments and by the example and guidance of teachers, parents and Jesuits.

The spiritual formation of the students in this model of education is done mostly through classes, daily prayer, and a combined program of retreats and Spiritual Exercises.

Each year, starting in kindergarten and culminating with senior year, the school provides the opportunity for each class to experience a one-day retreat. They propose a different topic for each level. The program uses the model of “Encuentros con Cristo” which is an experience of reflection and spiritual development in a retreat house for a day. Students attend these spiritual experiments in groups, which are led by teachers and parents.⁹⁸ For high school students, the Ignatian schools have developed a program that introduces them to the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. Gradually through the four years of high school they develop their inner spiritual dimension and the capacity for prayer and introspection. During senior year, they experience a three-day retreat in complete silence, wherein they complete a brief version of the Spiritual Exercises. This holistic program beginning in elementary school and concluding with the senior experience teaches students the basic tools of Ignatian spirituality and spiritual discernment. These skills enable graduates to live as adult Catholics equipped with spiritual resources and habits of discernment. An Ignatian education not only forms a distinctive type of spirituality among graduates but also shapes an approach to life, a mode of discernment, a habit of prayer, a focus on relationships with others, an attention to relationship with the self, and a value of intimacy with God.

Even though Ignatian education does a good job providing a multidimensional spiritual, religious, and sacramental formation with classes and pastoral activities, there is a need for a more integrative and multidimensional moral formation in the curriculum. If the vision is to provide students with an integrated spiritual and scholarly formation, then one

⁹⁸ Fr Eduardo Levy, S.J. created the “Encuentros con Cristo” retreats and they have been part of the spiritual formation programs of several Ignatian schools all over Latin America. The program has been successfully implemented in Ignatian schools of Chile, Colombia and Mexico since 1970s. In every place and context, the program has been adapted according to the formation necessities of each different school and culture. The program has also been updated every decade to respond better to the different times.

key dimension remains largely undeveloped: morality. This lacuna calls for an updated and contextual pedagogy of moral formation, one that goes beyond a lecture on deontological morality. An Ignatian moral formation should promote the moral development of students and connect their morality with, the sacraments, their faith, spirituality, and identity as members of the Catholic Church.

The following proposes that education in virtue ethics offers Ignatian schools a suitable approach for the urgent questions of moral theology and needs for a Jesuit moral formation. This proposal is neither a program for moral formation nor a specific curriculum for virtue ethics education. Rather, this brief invitation intends to open the conversation about moral theology, virtue ethics, and moral pedagogy, particularly within the context of Ignatian Catholic education in Chile. If this proposal of moral formation works well in the current context, the effort will benefit the Catholic people of the future. If today they receive a good moral formation that enables young Catholics to integrate the teachings of the Church with their social context while maturing in character and hope, then tomorrow they will be better prepared to face the challenges of being Catholic in the twenty-first century.

Moral Formation

For many years, the moral formation of people in Catholic education has relied on a deontological approach and has tried to teach the morality of the church through moral rules, principles, and commandments. This enterprise of deontological moral formation has contributed to the state of moral perplexity described in chapter one. However, the rules and morality formed through deontological teaching does not adequately address the context or the concrete moral struggles of contemporary people. A deontological approach seems to offer a promising pedagogy as it outlines clear rules to teach and guidelines for young people

to follow, focused on the consequences of human action. However, it does not propose an integral morality that develops together with the whole person.

For decades the Catholic Church has taught moral norms through a deontological approach. One pedagogical practice in this moral framework is to teach moral rules during formation and encourage students then to apply those rules to particular circumstances in their personal lives. The other common practice in moral formation is the solution of moral dilemmas. Neither of those pedagogical practices takes account of the context, the character of the person, or the particulars of the circumstance. Deontological moral formation has two problems: it is too abstract, due to its focus on rules and principles, and it has no connection to real life.

A deontological moral formation also conflates the transgression of moral rules with sin. The consequence of this is that people reduce their moral life to a big series of mistakes and sins. In this framework, the “solution” is usually reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, through which one can “wash away” the sin, mistakes, and errors in their lives. This dynamic of hearing a rule, committing a sin, and receiving forgiveness tends to become a repetitive, cyclical behavior that frustrates people, leaving them ill-prepared to change behaviors with complexity that goes beyond the dualistic thinking of right and wrong and offering them no recourse but to constantly return to square one.

The consequences of teaching the morality of the Church from a deontological approach are problematic. The framework’s focus on unchangeable moral principles does not account for the cultural context and social reality of the contemporary Catholic person, leaving her without a moral theology or moral skills to cope with the state of perplexity. A morality focused almost on rules instead of a comprehensive morality focused on the person makes it very difficult to integrate the moral dimension with the other different dimensions

of human life. A deontological approach fails to relate morality with faith and the sacramental and spiritual life of the Church. By exclusively embracing the deontological approach, the Church leaves the children of God with an underdeveloped moral formation.

Virtue Ethics Moral Formation

Chapter one described the state of moral perplexity in Chile and the need for two things: a more suited moral approach and an alternative to deontology to provide moral formation. In chapter two, I showed how virtue ethics is a more suitable approach for Catholic morality because it is able to address the context and is less focused on moral rules. This Chapter has described the model for religious formation in Ignatian Schools in Chile and has found so far, there is a necessity for a better moral framework than moral rules and principles. For Ignatian education, virtue ethics seems to be a better approach to provide moral formation together with the other dimensions of the faith.

A multidimensional Catholic formation proposes through pastoral activities and classes, an integral religious formation that connects the different dimensions of faith and the different dimensions of the self. Specifically, a moral formation through virtues should follow the core structure of virtue ethics which consists in end, the virtues, and the developing process of becoming better people. These three elements combined with sacramental, spiritual and religious formation could be articulated, as the base for a virtue ethics moral formation. Therefore, a formation program on virtues should set clearly the end of that formation. A program of moral formation should also teach the virtues that should be at the center of the moral life of the students and finally, this moral formation should develop moral habits that would promote the lifelong process of growing and thriving.

Moral Formation that Sets the Moral Good

Virtue ethics, as a teleological approach should set the end of the moral life and orient the moral formation towards that end. If any virtue ethics has a *telos*, which is identified with the human good or end. What is the *telos* for Christian virtue ethics? What is the *telos* of a Catholic moral formation? Thomas Aquinas consistently identifies the end with God in many parts of his *Summa Contra Gentiles*.⁹⁹ On Chapter XVII, he writes:

For if nothing tends to something as its end, except in so far as this is good, it follows that good, as such, is an end. Consequently that which is the supreme good is supremely the end of all. Now there is but a supreme good, namely God as we have shown in the First book. Therefore, all things are directed to the highest good, namely God, as their end¹⁰⁰

On Aquinas theology, the Aristotelian *telos* becomes God the Creator for Christian teleology: “all creatures, even those that are devoid of reason, are directed to God as their last end.”¹⁰¹ And also God becomes the cause of the human will, because “is evident from the fact that the will is ordained to the universal good. Therefore, nothing else can be the cause of will but God Himself, Who is the universal good”¹⁰² says Aquinas on the sixth article of the IX question of *Prima secundae*. According to what Aquinas says, the end of any Christian teleology is God, therefore the end of a moral formation through virtues should set the end in God. God as *telos* for the moral life provides direction and perspective. Direction towards any moral developmental is done, the cause and the perspective for the

⁹⁹ Thomas, *Introduction to Aquinas*, 429.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas, *Introduction to Aquinas*, 435.

¹⁰¹ Thomas, *Introduction to Aquinas*, 442.

¹⁰² Thomas, *Introduction to Aquinas*, 508.

moral life. Through theology classes, during the celebration of the sacraments, homilies or Spiritual Exercises, the theological and the Spiritual formation have the opportunity to help setting the end for the moral life in God.

Virtue ethics formation sets its *telos* in God the Father. By doing so, the moral life becomes a relationship with the Father that looks more like the parables of Luke 15 and less than a training for perfection.¹⁰³ A moral life oriented towards the Father enriches morality with theological content. Moral theology and Scripture, can be combined. Moral theology, moral formation and theology can be taught together.

Virtue ethics as moral formation sets the end in the Holy Spirit. In this perspective, Catholic people could develop their moral life together with their spiritual life. The moral life lived in relationship with the Holy Spirit, becomes less ratio-centered and more spiritual-centered. This relationship allows to relate, for example, spiritual discernment with moral discernment.

Setting the end in God, the virtue ethics morality opens the moral dimension to a relationship with Christ, the Son of God. By setting the *telos* of this moral formation in Christ, the moral life becomes Christocentric. The way that Jesus talks, acts, and feels becomes the model of virtuous life for Christians: not to imitate the life of Christ but to become him.¹⁰⁴ The life of Christ becomes the way of life for Christians in every dimension, included the moral dimension. A moral life lived in relationship with the Son of God is a moral life accompanied by the Lord, the Teacher, the Immanuel God-with-us.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ The series of parables in Luke 15 are the stories of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), The lost coin (Luke 15:8-10) and The lost son (Luke 15:11-24). All of them set a frame of something dearly loved which is lost and recovered with great joy at the end of the story.

¹⁰⁴ Galatians 2:16,19-20

Another aspect of having God as the *telos* for this morality is that Christian life becomes a pilgrimage. The journey of life and the journey of the moral life become the one integral pursue of God. This pilgrimage towards God, the good is also done in the company of others: The Church, the Holy Spirit and of the Son of God who walks in front of us. He has showed us the way and he walked the path of human life before us. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”¹⁰⁶ The theological frame for this teleological moral formation is a great novelty that virtue ethics brings to the morality of the Church.

Moral Formation that Teaches Virtues

A virtue ethics moral formation should teach virtues, which are not an abstract content to memorize but traits of the character. The process of teaching virtues is a combination of learning and practice in order to deepen them as they become part of the own character.

For the context of Ignatian education in Chile, I propose to teach the following set of virtues as a minimum and basic ground. Ignatian schools can teach the content and nature of these virtues in class but that teaching should be paired with a pedagogical methodology of practice of virtues.¹⁰⁷ This chapter would briefly mention some of the characteristic of these

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 1:22-23

¹⁰⁶ John 14,6

¹⁰⁷ The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity according to Aquinas are infused virtues which can not be taught but only received. The Ignatian schools have already very good programs to teach faith as content and pastoral activities to practice and celebrate faith. It is true that hope and charity and faith can not be taught in the strict sense, but the spiritual, religious, and moral formation can always contribute to the better reception of these infused virtues. The closeness and the synergy the traits of the moral character with the traits of the spiritual dimension only promotes beneficial interactions between the moral and the spiritual life of the person. Finally, another characteristic that hope, faith and charity have in common is that the three of them are able to be practice and exercised. Even when they can't be taught they can (and should) be practiced through acts of charity, acts of faith and acts of hope. Gradually the practice would help becoming what they practice: people of faith, people of hope and people of love.

virtues and suggest some ways of practicing them but is impossible to address complete program of formation in virtues here. That is the responsibility of each educative center.

A moral formation through virtues should teach and practice the four cardinal virtues. According to Keenan, “the four virtues are cardinal because they sufficiently order all those areas of our lives that are engaged in moral acting.”¹⁰⁸ Also, the four cardinal virtues work together in synergy: “we are not called to be faithful and self-caring in order to be just, nor are we called to be self-caring and just in order to be faithful. None is auxiliary to the others. Each is a distinctive virtue, none being a subset or subcategory of the others. They are cardinal.” The four are equally important, and moral formation should teach them in an integrated way.

The first virtue to teach in moral formation is the virtue of temperance. As part of the multidisciplinary formation, this virtue can be taught in the classroom as well as practiced.

Temperance perfects the concupiscible appetite, which is the natural inclination in human beings to pursue what is good or pleasing to the senses and to avoid what is harmful. This virtue has particularly to do with the desires and pleasure of touch which include food, drink and sex. Temperance moderates these desires which can be very powerful for people, thus posing serious obstacles to what reason requires.¹⁰⁹

This is a virtue that allows people to know themselves. It is the virtue of knowing one's limits, temptations, and mistakes. If temperance becomes moral habit, people grow in wisdom, in self-control, and in self-esteem. Temperance allows people to understand that any process of moral development is gradual and requires patience and time. Temperance

¹⁰⁸ Keenan, “Proposing Cardinal Virtues,” 724.

¹⁰⁹ Katherine C. Hennessey, “Education as Formation: Virtue Ethics and Catholic Education” 2013, 57.

can be taught in the Ignatian education in many ways: practice of sports, study, retreats, lunch time and the way of behaving in those situations. In all these instances there is an opportunity to teach about the virtue of temperance as self-control, self-knowledge or self-care according to the situation and context.

The second virtue that should be taught in a moral formation through virtues is the virtue of fortitude.

Fortitude (also stated as courage) is the virtue perfecting what Aquinas calls the irascible appetite. [...] The irascible appetite inclines a person to resist the things that might be obstacles to the good. Fortitude is the quality of character that removes the obstacles to justice or rectitude of the will.¹¹⁰

Fortitude makes people brave. Fortitude is the capacity of the character to face adversities and the most difficult situations without abandoning the struggle. Sometimes the virtue of fortitude is expressed when people stand their ground and stand their rights or the rights of others. When people fight for the truth, stand for freedom, or defend peace in difficult circumstances, they are practicing the virtue of Fortitude. In educational psychology, fortitude is close to resilience. Thus, it is a very valuable virtue to develop in teenagers, especially in order to prepare them to face the challenges that come with adulthood.

Another virtue that should be taught in a program of virtue ethics is the virtue of fidelity according to Keenan. "Fidelity is the virtue that nurtures and sustains the bonds of those special relationships that we enjoy whether by blood, marriage, love, or sacrament. Fidelity requires that we treat with special care those who are closer to us. If justice rests on impartiality and universality, fidelity rests on partiality and particularity."¹¹¹ Those particular

¹¹⁰ Hennessey, "Education as Formation," 57.

¹¹¹ Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," 725.

bonds and relationships are valuable and very important for the whole moral development of the person. In Christian virtue ethics the fidelity to others is strictly related to our fidelity to God and the base for all our faithfulness is rooted in the faithfulness that God has in us. Fidelity is the virtue that honors the given word, the commitment with other people in special relationships, such as couples, friends, or family. According to Keenan, the virtue of fidelity is especially relevant for the current context. “Fidelity also captures the concern of contemporary moral theologians and ethicists. Fidelity expresses, for instance, the covenant ethics of the late Paul Ramsey, the friendship ethics of Gilbert Meilaender and Paul Wadell, the loyalty ethics of George Fletcher, and the commitment ethics of Margaret Farley.” The teaching of this virtue can be done in a way that the student may be able to see and grow in respect to relationships, valuing them more deeply and especially appreciating those bonds that have helped to form their character.

There are many opportunities to teach fidelity in the school life: from the fidelity to the soccer club to the fidelity to the boyfriend or girlfriend of the students. In many situations teachers and the whole formative community of a school can teach the virtue of fidelity. For example, fidelity to the laws of the country or the responsibilities of each citizen to participate in a democratic process of elections. The spiritual exercises and the moments of prayer, the sacraments and the liturgical life can also be places to teach the fidelity to prayer, to silence, and to the people that they are committed to. Another opportunity to teach about fidelity are different commitments that the students increasingly take as they grow. This moral formation should constantly help them to be more faithful to those commitments and also find joy and virtue in that fidelity. Finally, some other ways to teach in very concrete situations the virtue of fidelity is through the value of the offered own word of honor and the respect for the honor of other people, especially the weak and old. To be

able to recognize, value and respect the honor of people is one expression of the virtue of fidelity.

The virtue of justice is more related to a sense of fairness and not necessarily the virtue of justice is related to law:

Justice, then, is not dependent upon the law. That a society does not outlaw an activity does not mean that the activity is just. Racism sexism, and other forms of exclusion have been and continue to be permitted in many societies by laws the virtue that perfects the will.¹¹²

Justice, in Keenan's reflection, is also the virtue that expresses the care for all. In a large perspective, a just person is open his or her relational dimension to relate towards the humanity and towards the society that they belong. In a personal level the virtue of justice is the moral capacity to give everyone what is fair and just. The character of a just person is commonly related to other virtues like honesty, fairness, and selflessness. Justice is one of the key virtues that grows in the person together with the social moral subject. The more the people of a society act justly, the more just that society becomes. Also, justice is one of the traits of character that more clearly reflects cultural ethos of the society that people belong. In the context of Chile, Justice should be addressed through a moral formation in connection with the academic disciplines of social studies and history. The political process of losing rights during the dictatorship and recovering them back during democracy could teach lessons of the virtue of Justice in the country.

Prudence is the last cardinal virtue that has to be present in a program of moral formation through virtues.

This is the virtue that allows a person to reason well in the midst of particularities of life. It is a virtue that is *needed* by the other virtues and which also needs the other virtues in order to, 'exercise its most distinctive act. As such, it is both a virtue

¹¹² Keenan, *Virtues For Ordinary Christians*, 69.

perfecting the human capacity to reason and it also assists in perfecting other capacities.¹¹³

This is a very helpful virtue to learn during the school years. Prudence is the moral virtue that helps people to be mindful, to look at the context before making any moral decision. Prudence is the advisor for moral action and the virtue that helps people in every step on the journey of becoming virtuous. Through the teaching of prudence, is also possible also to teach about priorities. Prudence has a role in the process of moral discernment balancing the other three cardinal virtues: “In the more harmonious classical list of cardinal virtues, prudence's primary task was to determine justice when dealing with our actions, temperance when dealing with our desires, and fortitude when dealing with our struggles.”¹¹⁴ Prudence is the virtue that makes people wise because is the virtue in which all the other virtues hinge.

All these virtues are essential parts of the moral formation. Two pedagogical important elements are about the teaching and practice of virtues. When is said that is necessary to “teach virtues,” that means that those virtues should be taught in the classroom and out-of-the classroom. The entire moral life becomes a process of developing those traits of character and growing on the knowledge of them. When is said “practice of virtues” it also means that those virtues should always be exercised personally, socially and as humanity. The constant practice or living the virtues becomes gradually part of the traits of the character and at the same time, a way of living. The constant practice and the constant learning about virtues is a dynamic that extends beyond the school years.

¹¹³ Hennessey, “Education as Formation.”

¹¹⁴ Keenan, “Proposing Cardinal Virtues,” 722.

Developing Moral Habits to Become Virtuous

In a moral formation through virtues is important to set the end and to learn and practice virtues, but that is not enough. Virtue ethics is not about right and wrong but about growing and becoming a better person. The process of becoming virtuous never ends and the formation should develop certain habits to promote that constant process of development. This part is focused on the development of particular moral habits to help and promote the natural process of moral growth. If these moral habits are part of the moral character at the end of the formation years, there would be good chances that the process of growing in virtue continues beyond the school years. These moral habits would facilitate a life according to virtues which would be a constant growth in the direction of the good, while deploying virtues for the rest of the life.

Sense of Continuity and Development.

Virtue ethics formation is able to develop the moral habit of continuity. The developmental character of virtue ethics would gradually be developing the sense of continuity in the moral life. Instead of focusing in particular moments or in particular moral acts this approach would pay more attention to the process of process of growing on virtue. The reason of this is the focus of virtue ethics and the nature of virtues. The focus of virtue ethics is on the character and the character is in constant development. The nature of virtues is also different from the nature of principles or rules. That difference nature of the virtues makes this normative morality a developing morality. The sense of constant development and continuity in the moral life helps to live a more integral morality. This moral habit would help to see the moral life in the perspective of constant and continuous growth.

Moral discernment and the Capacity to Discern

A moral formation through virtue ethics should also promote the capacity to make moral discernment. The process of choosing the right thing to do and the best and virtuous way of doing that action is part the process of using the practical reason. A moral formation that forms through the pursue of the good and through the practice of the virtuous actions should gradually develop the capacity to make moral discernments. From Aristotle to the present time there is a unanimous consent in recognizing that there is a part of the human reason exclusively dedicated to this realm of morality. The practical reason is that faculty to make decisions, evaluate and choose. This human faculty needs also constant practice and develops together with the moral character. One of the expected moral habits that people should develop at the end of the formation years is this capacity for moral discernment

Virtue ethics moral formation and Ignatian education should specially promote and develop this moral capacity. In the Ignatian schools in Chile, the moral formation could naturally be combined with spiritual formation and the formation on spiritual discernment would naturally integrate with moral discernment.¹¹⁵ This ability to do moral and spiritual discernment together, is one of the most valuable moral habits from a moral formation through virtues in Ignatian Schools. The Catholic people that receive this kind of moral formation would be able to do discernments of spiritual and moral matters combined. Catholic people would have the capacity to bring the perspective of morality¹¹⁶ and the perspective of spirituality to their struggles and discernments.

¹¹⁵ Tony Mifsud S.J., *Moral de Discernimiento* (Santiago, Chile: San Pablo, 2002).

¹¹⁶ Tony Mifsud S.J., *Realidad Que Interpela: Decisiones Responsables*, Libros Del Entrevero (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2017).

Sense of Relationship and Capacity to Relate

The approach of virtue ethics is not focused on things but in people. Virtue ethics tries to develop virtues on the moral character of the person, sets the end in the person of God and relates the relational dimension of the self with the moral dimension of the self. At the end of the process of moral formation through virtues, people would have developed also their capacity to relate to others. Virtue ethics is not a morality for lonely people and develops this moral habit of relate to others, to God, and to the context. This moral habit will make the person aware that is not alone in the world, and that human interactions and relationships are essential to thrive in life.

One of the objections to virtue ethics is the danger of this morality in becoming narcissistic.¹¹⁷ Joseph Kotva rejects those claims saying that there is not authentic virtue ethics without loving service to others. “Some virtues are basically relationship with others and that a certain theory could hardly call itself Christian and self-centered at the same time.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, a truly Christian moral formation based on virtues would develop a sense of relationship and openness to others. This moral habit for relationship should be developed during the formation years and after that it would remain in constant development, keeping of the person open to others, attentive to their necessities and mindful to whom is becomes neighbor.¹¹⁹ A truly Catholic virtue ethics moral formation is able to open the moral dimension of the person to others and to grow together moral, social and

¹¹⁷ Kotva, *Christian Case for Virtue*, 145.

¹¹⁸ Kotva, *Christian Case for Virtue*, 145.

¹¹⁹ Luke 10: 27-29 This is the passage of the gospel when Jesus changes the perspective of a man from focusing on rules and commandments to focus on people. The question: “Who is my neighbor” changed his perspective and the same change is expected with this moral approach: from deontological moral formation to a virtue ethics moral formation.

spiritual dimensions. In this sense, the relationship with Christ and the teachings of the scripture are an essential component of this virtue ethics moral formation. At the end, is Christ the teacher who would teach the people of God the virtuous and good life that God the Father wants for us all in this life. Looking at Jesus and fixing our moral formation on Him, is the way to teach virtues and to grow in the moral dimension relating always to the good that as believers think is the summon good for us.

Keenan also says that the relational dimension of the self plays an important role in the moral process of virtue development.¹²⁰ The virtue of self-care, the care for others and the virtue of justice are three calls that appeal to the moral character. For Keenan, the responses to those calls are expressed through the practice of the virtues of justice, fidelity and self-care. In order to hear that calling from others and from the own self, is necessary to develop in the first place this moral ability of openness. During the time of growing and development, people in formation experience different sorts of relationships that slowly shape and form the character of that person. Parents, family members, teachers, classmates, coaches, friends and neighbors will create the social network of the student but also those relationships and interactions will shape the character.

The outcome of this moral skill would be a person able to interact socially in a healthy way. The social dimension and openness to others as part of the moral life would make that person recognize the important role of relationships for the formation of the moral character and for life in general.

¹²⁰ Keenan, *Virtues for Ordinary Christians*, 55.

CONCLUSIONS

The first chapter of this thesis describes the state of moral perplexity and explains the antecedents of that situation. The moral perplexity of Catholic people and the distance between the Church and the Chilean society make this situation critical for the future of the Church. In order to continue contributing to the life of the people and the Chilean culture, the Catholic Church needs a different approach for moral theology, for Catholic morality and for moral formation. Chapter two proposes virtue ethics as a more suitable approach for the Catholic morality. Virtue ethics is more capable to address the context and able to develop a moral theology more relevant to the needs of the Catholic people today. Looking at the future, chapter three proposes three elements for a moral formation through virtue ethics in catholic education: set the end in God, teach and practice virtues and develop moral habits for the challenges of the future.

Virtue ethics offers a rich matrix of thinking that could help Catholic moral theology to develop a more meaningful and fruitful morality for the people of God. The common ground of virtues and the pursuit of happiness of this approach is a privileged field for moral theology to develop a creative and contextual morality in Chile. The proposal of virtue ethics could finally “shed light on the loftiness of the calling of the faithful in Christ and the obligation that is theirs of bearing fruit in charity for the life of the world”¹²¹ as the Vatican Council II invited many years ago. The effort of this thesis was to contextually reflect on a theological problem like moral perplexity and propose virtue ethics as a better response for the needs of the time and context. In that sense, this thesis is also an effort to respond to the

¹²¹ Abbott and Gallagher, *The Documents of Vatican II*, 452.

invitation of the Vatican Council II and the needs of the people of God. The current context of the Catholic Church in Chile is complex and problematic. I hope that the effort of this thesis could contribute to alleviate the sufferings of many Catholics by offering them an optimistic and integral moral perspective that focuses on the person instead of on principles and moral rules. I hope this work could help to develop a morality that invites everyone to be better disciples of Christ every day.

One of the needs of the Catholic people in Chile is for a proper moral formation that would help them to integrate all the different dimensions of their selves. A deontological moral formation that teaches moral rules is not enough for the moral maturity and religious maturity of the Catholic people today. Even when moral rules are necessary, in cases of extreme violence, danger or with children, for the majority of the Catholic people rules and principles are not enough. The effort of this thesis was to contribute to the efforts of the Chilean Church that wants the best formation and the best education for her children. As parents do, the Church as mother also cares for their children, and wants the best available education for them. I hope this work might contribute to the moral formation of the next generations of Catholics and open a dialogue about the responsibilities of theologians, parents and educators to ensure that they receive a better moral formation than our generation. I hope that through this moral formation based on virtues they could enjoy a moral life more integrated with the spiritual, sacramental and faith life of the Church.

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