CULTURE & RELIGIOUS STUDIES BIBLIOGRAPHY

**N.B. See also Comparative Ethics, Inculturation, and Global Ethics Bibliographies

Last update: November 9, 2017

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Articles on Culture


Several articles coming from a symposium held in Rome under the auspices of the Congregation for Catholic Education.


Discusses inculturation, multiculturalism, and internationality in the context of religious communities. Concrete examples of cross-cultural misunderstandings which arise in various communities are used to illustrate the author's points about the requirements of genuine inculturation and multiculturalism.


Discusses the “traditional” ethos which is common to many of the agrarian cultures of Latin America, the “liberal” of the industrialized north, and then proposes of “radical” ethos which would address many of the problematic aspects of both of these ethoses. A helpful article for delineating what an ethos involves and how it functions in a given culture, though Brackley’s proposal for a “radical” ethos is a bit underdeveloped and rather too simplified.

Increased interest in the so-called "globalization of ethics" has led to a number of studies which utilize various hermeneutical and communicative theories to sketch out viable paradigms for developing a fundamental Christian ethics as a whole, as well as its various components such as moral reasoning, which together would be capable of entering into and maintaining such discourse. The accent of most of these studies falls on the universalizability of ethical discourse and scant attention has been given to the cultural particularity of each and every ethos and ethical system. This article briefly rehearses the principal elements of the concerns raised by the globalization of ethics and then focuses on the particularity of culture using insights from both cultural anthropology and inculturation. The Confucian context of Korea is employed to illustrate some of the issues raised by greater attention to cultural particularity.


Cahill's Presidential Address given at the 1993 Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) Convention.


Culture “is a happening within nature. Culture belongs to nature. It is, in a metaphorical sense, nature’s organ..culture is nature’s own process of being self-aware–of being aware of itself, of trying to understand itself and its world–and of trying to discharge fundamental processes of evolution under the condition of free choice and decision.” (p. 536) Religion can serve as an information system within culture that is part of the effort of nature to understand itself and conduct itself in freedom. Myth and ritual are the heart of religion which form critical components of the cultural information and guidance system.


One of several essays presented at the Sixth East-West Philosophers' Conference held in August 1989 in Honolulu.


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From the author supplied abstract: Vatican II’s documents Gaudium et Spes and Ad gentes reveal two interrelated dialogues: a dialogue between Church and other religious traditions, and a more general dialogue between faith and particular societies. The theme takes its cue form Paul VI’s first encyclical, Ecclesiam Suam (1964) and, in the last fifty years, has flowered into a rich body of teaching expressed in various documents. It became central to the teaching of John Paul II with his passionate concern for the dignity of the human person. Benedict XVI in a series of speeches delivered both before and after becoming Pope introduced a note of caution to such cultural dialogue. While accepting that he offered an impressive case against the positivism, which he considered to be undermining contemporary culture, we should be hesitant in following his more cautious approach.

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Discourse given to the Asian Bishops in Hong Kong in March 1993. Ratzinger raises some cautions about certain understandings of inculturation, but the majority of the article concerns a theological reflection on the interplay between faith and culture.


Reimer-Barry uses her fieldwork on Catholic women suffering from HIV/AIDS in Chicago and Kenya to outline a call for “empathetic listening” that seeks first to discover what is genuinely going on in people’s lives—before moving to a judgment of what the proper ethical position might be. In this regard she is particularly critical of Pope Benedict XVI’s 2009 negative comments about condom use in Africa which he delivered in an airborne news conference on the way to Africa. Far more effective would have been to land in Africa, talk with a variety of people there who knew the situation first-hand, and then—and only then—presume to take a position on a practical issue like the advisability of condom usage in a situation common in sub-Saharan Africa.

At this writing Reimer-Barry was Assistant Professor of theological ethics at the University of San Francisco.


One of several articles coming from a symposium held in Rome under the auspices of the Congregation for Catholic Education. The author holds that culture and faith are intimately connected, with each influencing the other. In this interaction the Church has at times identified itself closely with culture, and at other times "disengaging itself from those cultures that were on the point of disappearing, always preserving intact the unity of the faith. Even today we finds [sic] this oscillation between the necessity to preserve the deposit of the faith with a pastoral labor which is vigilant of its unity and the need to distance itself from cultures that die out, so to embrace and christianize new personal and cultural realities." [Quotation from the English abstract].

The author is professor at the Université Catholique de Louvain.

Culture Bibliography

Summarizes the past fifty years of development in the Church's understanding of the relationship between faith and culture, and examines the challenges now facing the Church as it seeks to be genuinely pluricultural and faithful to the Gospel.

Schreiter is professor of doctrinal theology at the Chicago Theological Union.


One of several essays presented at the Sixth East-West Philosophers' Conference held in August 1989 in Honolulu.


Discussion of how religious narratives function from a hermeneutical viewpoint in various cultures.


Books on Culture

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Writing largely from the perspective of a cultural historian, Burke advances the concept of “cultural hybridity” to identify the various levels and types of changes that occur when representatives of different cultures meet. To some extent Burke’s work can be seen as an extended essay on the phenomena of what other cultural anthropologists term “acculturation” and/or “bricolage.”


French original: *Evangelisation et developpement des cultures.*

Contents: The church's perception of modernity -- Modernity as a culture to evangelize -- Inculturation -- Can we still hear a counter-cultural prophet? -- Toward a new convergence of science and religion? -- Christians and the modern conception of cultural rights -- The new evangelization facing agnostic culture.

Carrier is a French Canadian Jesuit, former *Rector Magnificus* of the Pontifical Gregorian University, and Secretary to the Pontifical Council for Culture.


Addresses in Italian, French, German, English, Spanish, and Latin.


George is currently Cardinal-Archbishop of Chicago.


Several articles on various aspects of inculturation, culture and faith.


Traces the development of cultural relativism in American anthropology and then considers a philosophical approach to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of relativism, while concluding with a suggestion as to how both Western and non-Western cultures can be viewed.


Hefner defines culture as learned patterns of behavior and symbol systems that humans construct to be able to interpret the world, guide behavior, and interface with the rest of the natural world. Culture and nature are not to be understood in dualistic terms, but culture is part of nature itself.


Rather than focusing on one univocal understanding of human “nature,” Hopkins suggests multiple notions can be articulated through the three variables of race, culture, and religion.

Hopkins is Professor of Theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School.


Uses Wittgenstein's philosophical model on language and applied it to culture, i.e., meanings which are grounded not in empirical objects, but rather in the norms and rules which govern their use in a particular social or cultural context.


Asserts the cross-cultural universality of certain feature of conversational organization, a claim that should stimulate research in this area.

Considers American cultural peculiarities that helps Americans see themselves as others do, and vice versa.


Delineates cultures from Athens and Jerusalem in the West: 1) the culture of Isaiah and Jeremiah and the prophets; 2) the culture of Plato, Aristotle, philosophers and scientists; 3) the culture of Home, Isocrates, Virgil, Cicero, the culture of poets, dramatists, orators and statesmen; 4) the culture of Phidias, Polyeletus, Praxiteles, the culture of artists, architects, and performers.

At this writing O’Malley was professor of Church history at the then Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA. He subsequently retired as professor in residence at Georgetown University.


Reviewed by John Kiess in *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33/1 (Spring/Summer 2013): 190-191/


Stivers argues American culture, is a culture of cynicism. The pursuit of the values of success, survival, happiness, and health has produced a corrosive and pervasive morality which is actually an "anti-morality". The results are norms without meaning, where everyday life is reduced to an empty struggle for power and satisfaction-leading to unhappiness, depression, addiction, susceptibility to religious cults, and damaged personal relationships.


Suggests that ethics should be understood teleologically in relation to God’s goal and purpose for creation. The universality of this goal then can be a way to analyze culturally varying ways of responding to God’s purposes. Uses the African example of exchange of bride price.

From Edwards’ review: “Wilsey first sets out to define American exceptionalism as an
“aspect” of civil religion. By civil religion, Wilsey intends “a set of practices, symbols
and beliefs distinct from traditional religion, yet providing a universal values paradigm
around which the citizenry can unite” (p. 20). He helpfully imagines civil religion as a
conversation between the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Exceptionalism,
meanwhile, is a part of that dialogue, strongly akin to patriotism. Wilsey wants to redeem
the term exceptionalism by distinguishing between its “open” and “closed”
variants—which happen to track well with Enlightenment universalism and Protestant
Christian sectarianism. Put simply, America is at its best when it listens to Thomas
Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln rather than Charles Finney and Jerry Falwell.”

Yoder, John Howard, Diane M. Yeager, and Glen H. Stassen. Authentic Transformation: A New

Critiques the Christ and culture typology used by H. Richard Niebuhr, and suggests that
the Church can best transform society by forming itself as an alternative community.

Yuhaus, Cassian, C.P., ed. The Catholic Church and American Culture: Reciprocity and

Contributions from David J. O'Brien, Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, John A. Coleman, S.J.,
Monika Hellwig, Hervé Carrier, S.J., and Martin E. Marty.

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