The seven deadly sins and the Catholic Church

JOHN DEELY

'That the mind is not intoxicated by wine alone'. (— John Cassian c. 421; epigram to Book V, Chapter 6, of the *Institutes*)

We have at least a list of agreed-upon terms on which our seminar was focused: *superbia*, *invidia*, *ira*, *acedia*, *avaritia*, *gula*, and *luxuria*. My task is to frame these terms within the perspective of a particular Western religious tradition, namely, the tradition of the Catholic Church.

So I begin discussion with the expression which is not part of the general list of terms, namely, the expression 'Catholic Church'. Maybe everyone has a clear idea of what this expression means, and therefore also of the specific tradition in terms of which I have been asked to frame our general terms. At the risk of sounding anti-Cartesian or, even worse, postmodern (but in my own sense: see Deely 1994b: 10–11; and Santaella Braga 1994: xi–xiii), I wish to begin with the considerations which, in my mind, inveigh against clarity in the understanding of the expression 'Catholic Church'.

Conceptus Catholici: Affirming the relative autonomy of reason in human affairs

Since I am writing in English, let me point out that, in common usage, the term 'Catholic' in the context of religious discourse is today a primarily oppositional term. It derives its meaning from a contrast with the term 'Protestant'. In June of 1526, a Diet of German princes, prelates, and burghers had convened at Speyer to consider the demand by Christians in allegiance to the papacy in Rome that the Edict of Worms should be fully enforced. According to this edict, issued on May 6, 1521, and formally promulgated by then-Holy Roman Emperor Charles V on May 26, the then-Augustinian Eremite friar, Martin Luther, had been

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given 'twenty-one days, dating from April 15', after which: 'no one is to harbor him. His followers are to be condemned. His books are to be eradicated from the memory of man'.[1] Social and political conditions, aggravated by Charles's absence in Spain, had effectively prevented the enforcement of this decree, and the followers of Luther had continued to multiply and strengthen. The Diet of Speyer, therefore, was a last-ditch attempt by Roman loyalists to achieve in fact what they had achieved in the fiction of law five years earlier. The attempt backfired, for the Diet issued as its concluding decree the decision (*Abschied*, commonly mistranslated in this case as 'recess'), pending the convening of a general council of the Christian church under German auspices, that no one should be punished for offenses against the Edict of Worms. This was in 1526.

In 1521, Leo X, who had transferred his political and military support from Francis I of France to Charles V within two days of the presentation of the Edict of Worms, was succeeded in the papacy by Pope Adrian VI. Earlier, as Bishop of Utrecht, Adrian had tutored Emperor Charles V as a youth growing up in Brussels, before the lad's accession to the Spanish Crown in 1516 as Charles I and to the Imperial Throne in 1519 as Charles V. This new pope, already in 1522, had demanded of a Diet at Nuremberg, without success, that the arrest of Luther be carried out. Adrian was succeeded in 1523 in the papal chair by Pope Clement VII, who, in his turn, in January of 1524, sent to a later session of the Diet of Nuremberg renewed demands for the arrest of Luther. But conditions favorable to the Roman cause had so far deteriorated at that point that the nuncio bearing Clement's demand, jeered by crowds when passing through Augsburg, had to enter Nuremberg secretly to avoid hostile demonstrations.

In 1529, Charles, in his capacity as Holy Roman Emperor and in alliance with Pope Clement VII, ordered the Diet of Speyer to reconvene on February 1. The new assembly bent with the new wind and repealed the concluding 1526 decision of the original Diet of Speyer. They replaced that decree with a new one 'permitting Lutheran services — but requiring the toleration of Catholic services — in Lutheran states, completely forbidding Lutheran preaching or ritual in Catholic states, enforcing the Edict of Worms, and outlawing Zwinglian and Anabaptist sects everywhere' (Durant 1957: 442). The Lutheran minority members in the reconvened assembly were horrified, and soon published their official 'Protest' rejecting the new decree. The signers of this protest were labeled 'protestants' by their colleagues in the Diet, and the term migrated thence to designate, first the German rebels from Rome's papacy, and then generally all rebels from the same.

In the remark just quoted, anyone carefully attending to my comments here will have noted the contrast of 'Catholic' to 'Lutheran' religious services and adherents, in a context that seems to give clear meaning to the term 'Catholic' as one accepting the Roman papacy, in contrast to the Lutherans and other dissenters who reject the papacy as a central or overriding ecclesiastical institution. This is the adversative or oppositional signification of the expression 'Catholic Church' that I alluded to in opening my own remarks. It fits well with a Saussurean semiotic and lends itself well to a deconstructive approach to the issues before us.

But for those who bear in mind and well understand the profound differences in the philosophical grammar of the terms 'semiotic' and 'semiology',[2] it is easy to see that this oppositional sense is hardly adequate to the discussion our seven general terms require. Is anyone really interested in the seven deadly sins as specifically interpreted by those alone who accept the Jesuit-led Counter Reformation against the several enduring Protestant Reformers? Surely it is necessary to go deeper into the term 'Catholic' than such a hermeneutic would allow.

At least so I think. For even the modern oppositional sense of the term 'Catholic' presupposes an older usage which belies the superimposed opposition, a Latin usage common after Augustine but found already in the first century writings of the Roman rhetorician Quintillian as a Latinization or transliteration of the Greek καθολικός, with the meaning 'universal, relating to all'. For Augustine there was an *ecclesia catholica* which had, essentially, two defining properties. First, it was originated by God in the person of His Son, the Second Person of three in which the Godhead itself consists, as ratified on the original Pentecost when the Third Person of the Godhead descended on the Apostles of the human incarnation of the Second Person, Jesus Christ, inspiring those apostles with their mission of going forth to teach — that is to say, convert — all nations. Second, this *ecclesia* was universal, that is to say, intended by God for all human beings.

Now you begin to see the problem occupying my mind. 'Catholic' in its original specificity signified nothing more than Christianity or Christendom in its totality. Of course, even here an oppositional meaning is tacitly in play: 'Catholic' refers to the second of the three main Western religions (Christianity as opposed to Judaism and Islam), in contrast to the Eastern religious traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism with their own internal variants and comparatively minor alternatives. But the oppositional meaning now is mere background.[3] The foreground signification is specifically Western and Christian. In this sense, Lutherans, Calvinists, Methodists, and the rest of 'protestantism' is no less 'catholic'

than are the 'Roman Catholics' who see the papacy as the central institution of hierarchized religious belief and practice.

But the common usage of *catholicus* or 'catholic' in this sense is post-Augustinian, according to *Harper's Latin Dictionary* (Andrews et al. 1907 [1879]: 301, col. 3), and specifically Latin. It is also pre-sectarian respecting contemporary Christian thought. So we begin to get something of a handle on a possible interpretation of the expression 'Catholic Church' that is both defensible and relevant to an historical framing of our seven general terms at the base of this seminar. In speaking of 'the seven deadly sins and the Catholic Church', we are addressing the notion of these so-called sins as that notion was framed by Latin Christianity and developed within that framework by those thinkers who have maintained something like a deep speculative continuity with the traditions of the Latin Age, often referred to as 'the middle ages' or 'medieval thought'. In general, though not exclusively, the thinkers 'catholic' in this sense are or have been in communion with the Church of Rome, but they are not necessarily 'Catholic' in the sense of those adherents of papal centrality and (after the fateful decree of the First Vatican Council passed in 1870) infallibility who embrace the counter-reformation in its opposition to the 'protestant' reformation.

But, and more importantly in my opinion, thinkers 'catholic' in this sense are not necessarily theologians. That is to say, they do not necessarily think in the framework of a specific religious belief to which they seek to give a rational articulation. But they do belong to that broad spectrum of 'catholic' intellectuals who, through reflection upon and in continuity with the medieval Latin heritage of thought, have contributed to the development of the understanding of contemporary problems as those problems are articulations of experience brought to linguistic expression. The very achievement of a linguistic expression lends to the problem articulated an irreducibly historical character, inasmuch as anthroposemiosis as capable of sustaining historical consciousness in the first place (and therewith the possibility of 'conscience', the basic individual form of historical consciousness presupposed to moral sense) differs from zoösemiosis precisely through the intervening variable of language as a secondary modeling system which produces, in turn, the postlinguistic structures of culture and distinctively human civilization in general.[4]

The 'Catholic Church', both in the medieval sense of *catholicus* and in the modern sense opposed to Protestant Churches, insofar as it has maintained continuity with the philosophical developments of the Latin Age, *is unique among religious traditions in having maintained a strong sense of the relative autonomy of rational thought in the sphere of human experience*. In contrast, all other Western religious institutions have ended up asserting the absolute autonomy of faith, meaning thereby a religious

belief articulated in propositions incapable of being proved (and, hence, incapable of being known to be true insofar as experience provides the means of rationally testing propositions) but asserted as necessarily accepted by anyone who is 'saved' and as, at the same time, criterial for deciding whatever issues in whatever sphere of life to which the religious authority cares to extend itself.

So you have the meaning of the expression 'Catholic Church' as a qualifier in my title. The title so qualified means the seven deadly sins as they appear in the Western intellectual tradition derived today from the Latin West in that part of it which definitively rejects the absolute autonomy of religious authority and belief by affirming the relative autonomy of rational discourse in determining and shaping the meaning of intelligible propositions as advanced from any source, including so-called 'sacred scriptures' in or through which, it is claimed, God acts or has acted as 'author'. This Western tradition arose mainly in the 'Catholic Church' in the original Latin sense of 'catholic', but it is not a sectarian position in the modern oppositional sense of 'Catholic'. My remarks, therefore, are neither sectarian nor theological.

The basic notion of sin

Having thus explained and, in part, explained away the term 'Church' in the expression 'Catholic Church' as it occurs in my title, I want next to clarify for you the principal term presupposed to the understanding of the expression 'The seven deadly sins' in the first part of my title. This is the notion of 'sin' itself in general terms, of which the 'seven deadly sins' are but species, albeit notoriously dangerous ones!

In Latin tradition, 'sin' is a species of evil, where 'evil' designates a limitation which prevents or obstructs a being from reaching a perfection which would otherwise be possible for that being. Among evils, some are external to the being limited: bad circumstances may obstruct a desirable outcome. Other evils are internal to the being limited: loss of sight prevents a being from having further visual experiences. Yet other evils are of one's own devising: one chooses to smoke regardless of the physical relations known to result through effects in the respiratory system; one chooses to have sex regardless of the attitude of one's partner; and so on. Only this last class of evil falls under the heading of 'sin', for sin is that specific form of evil which presupposes intelligence and choice. 'Sine voluntate', in Augustine's words, 'non est peccatum'.

The first example of sin is in part trivial, and both examples are taken from the relatively individualistic and private sphere; but more subtle and substantive examples pertaining to public life and the common good

are not hard to come by. The human being is an intelligent animal, which achieves its appropriate perfection and good principally in the use of intelligence as the means without which the true human good, socio-culturally no less than individually, can never be attained. At the time of this article's composition, the world's largest radio telescope is in danger of being dismantled without replacement so that a wealthy group can build on its site a golf course. It is doubtful in the highest degree that the persons involved on the side of the golf course have any awareness of the destructiveness of such a substitution relative to the true human good, unlike the individual smoker who knows full well but chooses not to care about the consequences of his habit. The adage, 'ignorance of the law is no excuse', however, holds no less for the natural moral law than it does for the positive laws of human legislation. At this stage of human history, to displace a unique, complex, and precious instrument of human understanding with a recreation complex for the well-to-do is an action by any moral standard criminal, however 'legal' it may be in the terms of positive law.[5] The same could be said for the dismantling of many government programs based on the highest technological and scientific skills of their workers in favor of a crass 'social program' which in fact will benefit no one so much as the politicians who therewith buy the votes of willingly dependent subcultural groups. (Perhaps needless to add, this is not the description of all social programs; it is a description only of disturbingly many.)

At its base in catholic tradition is the notion that sin is an unnecessary and deliberate compromising of the human good, a malicious restriction of or indifference to the true good of others for the sake of oneself and one's own immediate gratifications. Since to love someone is to wish that person good, says St. Thomas, it follows that for anyone inordinately to desire some passing good proceeds from the fact that the person in question has a disordered self-love. The key notion here is 'inordinate' or 'disordered': sin is not possible without a knowledge that is deliberately ignored in favor of an advantage to be gained.[6] Whence ignorance and passion can contribute to sin, either to augment or to diminish it, but only malice can constitute sin formally and properly speaking. Sin is a wanting of what one wants, regardless, and trying to get it.

Framing the basic notion in imaginations of the superhuman

But in its origins, this basic notion of sin is overshadowed and, one might almost say, hidden by an imagination of God's involvement in human affairs and actions, or of an evil before which we are effectively powerless. The latter exaggeration is illustrated by *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*'s

claim (Bolle 1967: 235) that 'sin always indicates the result of a power of evil that exceeds man's capabilities or it indicates that power itself'. The former imagination can be seen in the *Baltimore Catechism*'s (1884) definition of even that aspect of sin for which we have a personal responsibility — or what I have called the 'basic notion' of sin — as 'any wilful thought, word, deed, or omission contrary to the law of God'. This definition leaves entirely in the background the original catholic notion that the 'law of God' in question happens to be identical with the manner in which human nature, presupposing intelligence and freedom, is brought to fulfillment by disciplined exercise — that, in a word, the 'law of God' is the 'natural law', and that (Messner 1965: 44) 'natural law is nature for man'.[7]

By reason of such forgetfulness Fairlie could go so far as to say (1978: 7) that 'the idea of sin is preeminently a construction of Christian theology'. Here again, even more directly than in assigning a usable signification for the term 'catholic', we encounter the towering figure of Augustine of Hippo, who (c. 397) gave us the classical definition of sin, which the catechism mainly echoes,[8] as 'a word ["dictum", i.e., a word thought or spoken], deed, or desire contrary to the eternal law'.[9] Of this definition, St. Thomas Aquinas says, by way of defense (i. 1269–70: I–II. 71. art. 6 ad 5), that theologians consider sin principally in terms of an offense against God, even though philosophers should view it principally as an opposition to what is good for human beings; so Augustine's definition includes all that the philosophers will have to say, but looks further to the many considerations of religious faith which exceed human reason.[10]

The frame absorbs the picture

But here are seeds of trouble. The way is open for claims based on what exceeds human reason to be taken as a basis for overruling the use of intelligence in its own sphere, which is the realm of experience. In fact, this is the root of the problem resolved in catholic tradition in favor of reason's relative autonomy. But in other traditions (for example, Islam from the twelfth century to the present; orthodox Judaism; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints [Mormon]; and nearly all fundamentalist sects, including those under the Roman umbrella of papal allegiance) the resolution is rather in favor of an ultimate absolute autonomy of faith in propositions for which the pretense is insisted upon that intelligent interpretation plays no part. Religious faith may dwell on the eternal, but within experience we encounter only passing goods as such;

and it is not these goods that appear in the light of eternity so much as eternity that is glimpsed, if at all, in the light of these goods.

But the mischief Augustine worked in this area went much deeper than a mere choice — in itself hardly mischievous — of theological over philosophical priorities. Although it was taught before him by Paul (c. 10–c. 64), Tertullian (c. 155–220), Cyprian (d. 258), and Ambrose (339–397, from whom Augustine principally imbibed the notion),[11] Augustine did more than any other writer of the early Christian Umwelt to make effective, elaborated and celebrated in the later Latin Age the doctrine of an 'original sin' and 'fall' by which all humans are tainted from conception to death. He also developed the theme of predestination, the idea that every individual human being merely acts out in destiny a scenario prepared in advance by the will of God. These two Augustinian themes, original sin and predestination, have all too often so intertwined historically as to make the basic notion of sin as a wanton action destructive of the human good all but unintelligible. The basic catholic notion of sin, we saw, involves something unnecessary and deliberate affecting negatively the human situation. Both these elements are impossible in a scenario of predestination. Similarly with the doctrine of an 'original sin' committed by the first parents of the human race and communicated in its destructive effects to all of us: we are held guilty for something which we did not do, for an action in which we had no say whatever, and can do nothing to reverse.

From a number of angles, Augustine emerges as the hero or villain of this investigation, depending upon whether you are for or against sin. Augustine's writings are incredibly diverse and seminal for the whole Latin Age, which in effect Augustine inaugurated. From him comes the widespread use of the term 'catholicus' as a basic characterization of the medieval development. From him also come the basic ideas of sin and predestination which the protestant reformers seize upon in the sixteenth-century split of universal Christendom into today's competing sects.

But the pervasive Augustinian influence takes a definitely different turn in the protestant reformers than what we find in the catholic tradition as extending on both sides of the reformation divide. An unqualified embrace of the notion of predestination makes of personal sin nothing else and nothing more than the outward sign of divine reprobation, a disfavor which the individual's behavior only serves to confirm and verify. Original sin is also conceived differently among the reformers than in the catholic tradition, for while the medieval interpretation conceives the effect of original sin to be a wound of human nature which divine grace can heal and virtuous action can transcend, protestant tradition conceives the effect of original sin to be an irreversible corruption of human nature

which divine grace can cover over but never heal — a *massa damnata*, 'a pile of dung covered with snow', in Luther's vivid metaphor.

Sin: Original, social, and personal

We need to examine the notion of original sin. It was suggested to Augustine by the self-styled 'apostle'[12] Paul (57–58AD: Rom. 5: 12), with his claim that 'sin entered the world through one man, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned'. The evidence for this allegation as sifted by the intervening millennia is, one might say, slender to nonexistent. Presupposed in the whole discussion is the ancient fantasy of a 'Garden of Eden', a place and time when all was perfect, free from defect, deformity, illness, or death, and that the present human condition perfused with evils of various sorts can only be explained by an original action which justified God to expel the first parents from the garden and to close its gates to all future generations. The alleged proof of such a consequence (called traditionally 'concupiscence') was also stated by Paul (Rom. 7: 18–19): 'though the will to do what is good is in me, the performance is not, with the result that instead of doing the good things I want to do, I carry out the sinful things I do not want'. If I want to do good but sin instead, how else could this be explained than by a corruption of nature with which I was born, which I inherited from the first parents, the infamous 'Adam and Eve'?

The original presupposition is no longer widely held nor easily defensible. The Pauline inference, in consequence, has no validity, if it be true that internal conflicts between desires, wishes, hopes, and actual behavior are far better explained by the transition from zoösemiosis to anthroposemiosis and, within anthroposemiosis, from hunter-gatherer to city-dweller, than by an imagined 'fall' from a 'Garden of Eden' constructed purely through the semiosis of language in its species-specifically human sense.[13] It may be taken as a lesson of history (Durant and Durant 1968: 38) that the internal conflicts besetting human psychology 'may be the relics of his rise rather than the stigmata of his fall', understanding 'his' generically of the human.

What then are we to make of the idea of 'original sin'? Although he insists (1969: 330) that 'original sin is certainly a mystery which is not to be rationalistically disintegrated', Karl Rahner concludes (1969: 332) that 'original sin (with concupiscence and death) can be termed man's "situation", if we wish to refer to it briefly and intelligibly in what distinguishes it from personal sin'. Theologians may make what they will

of 'man's situation',[14] but in an evolutionary universe which anteceded the human species by billions of years, with many of those billions required simply to bring about the circumstances under which the emergence of rational animals on this planet could come about, the proposition that through the first rational animal death entered the world is, in the language of St. Thomas, contrary to reason and, in a word (some might incline to say), preposterous. The inference that, because we experience conflicts between our human desires and animal drives we must therefore be the victims of a corrupted nature, appears without merit in view of what has been uncovered, especially since the eighteenth century, about the complex and sometimes gerrymandered character of biological organisms.

The human condition, 'man's situation', as Rahner's prefeminist formula puts it, indeed contains many elements of moral evil which exceed individual but not social control, such as areas of starvation in a world with sufficient food if only the distribution channels could be properly organized, governments which seek systematically to control information without regard for truth and (what seems to be almost a corollary in such cases) without providing for the education of the subject peoples, and a thousand instances of like abuse. Much theological scholarship has been expended on identifying the condition of 'original sin' with the prevalence, past, present, and for the foreseeable future, of such circumstances. More recently, 'original sin' as the historical conditions of evil in the world into which we are born and socialized has been distinguished from 'social sin' as the cumulative effect of personal sin in cultural institutions or social situations. This notion is relatively new in moral consciousness, dating roughly to the interval between 1967 and 1978,[15] although authoritatively presaged in the 1965 *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* titled *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 25:

> To be sure the disturbances which so frequently occur in the social order result in part from the natural tensions of economic, political, and social forms. But at a deeper level they flow from man's pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere. When the structure of affairs is flawed by the consequences of sin, man, already born with a bent toward evil [and here we see the presupposition of 'original sin'], finds there new inducements to sin, which cannot be overcome without strenuous efforts and the assistance of grace.

There is merit in such a theological effort, to say the least; but the fact remains that the circumstances in question — the contamination of the social sphere by the consequences of personal sins embodied in sociocultural structures — are not the result of a fall from a previous state but, if anything, signs of transition from a far less organized world to a

world in need of much more and better organization of its resources, both physical and cultural — relics of rise rather than stigmata of fall, as noted above. To the extent 'sin' is involved, it is not a matter of inheritance but of the variously personal responsibilities of those in a position to meliorate institutions and customs but who refuse or neglect to do so for reasons of their own satisfaction to the disregard of the human good of those exploited by the institutions and situations they manage.[16] At the very minimum, we would have to introduce in this regard the classical notion of *sins of omission*,[17] although in the case of particular monsters of human culture, such as Stalin or Mao, large-scale social disorders very definitely reduce to sins of commission.[18]

Kinkead's *Explanation of the Baltimore Catechism of Christian Doctrine* (1891: 67) clearly makes the point that, in the catholic tradition up to his time, 'sin is first or chiefly divided into original and actual; that is, into the sin we inherit from our first parents and the sin we commit ourselves'. Philosophically, we may follow the distinction of St. Thomas between the theological view of sin as an offense against God and the philosophical view of that same reality as contrary to the human good (both as understood here and now and according to its as yet unrecognized requirements). Considering in this perspective the unnecessary and deliberate character proper to 'sin' as a matter of personal responsibility, we may accordingly background the notion of sin as inherited in order to foreground and concentrate prescisively and directly on that aspect of moral good and evil over which we have some control, about which we are able to do something, and for which we have personal responsibility. In other words, we retain that part of catholic tradition, both pre- and post-reformation, which alone fits with the notion of human reason or understanding as so grounded in experience as to enjoy and entitle a relative autonomy vis-à-vis the perspective of religious authority basing its claims on propositions formulable only in terms whose proper content transcends the measure of experience. Hence such authority forfeits all title to override present understanding of the human condition so far as it falls under our responsible control.

How habits of sin arise: The place of the so-called 'deadly sins'

It is precisely at this point that the true importance of the so-called 'deadly' sins emerges. To begin with, I have to confess that I have so far been unable to discover the origin of the adjectival use of 'deadly' in connection with our seven focal sins. In the medieval Latin world, where, as we have seen, the catholic tradition in the philosophical sense I have

tried to define here took its origin around the time and work of Augustine, the notion of 'deadly' sin pertained principally to the distinction between mortal and venial sin — *peccata mortalia et venialia*, a distinction which traces back especially to the work of Tertullian, c. 160–230, and perhaps ultimately, though ambiguously, to the fifth chapter of the first epistle of John (i. 90–100) in the New Testament.[19] Sufficient reflection and full consent of the will are required for all actual sins, i.e., evils wrought for which one has personal moral responsibility. What decides whether the sin is 'mortal' or not is the *matter*, the objective content, of the sin, in combination with the conscious commitment of the sinner. Where the matter is sufficiently serious, sufficiently reflected upon (or not reflected upon despite sufficient opportunity and occasion to have reflected), and deliberately engaged in, the sin has traditionally been considered as bringing, in effect, death to the soul.

The framing of this idea, it must be said, was in terms of an afterlife where the consequences of sin were considered to be surely meted out. But, in terms of the catholic tradition's basic notion of sin, this further question of an individual survival of bodily death may be considered strictly irrelevant to the question of good or evil here and now. For, here and now, certain actions comparatively promote and others comparatively diminish the realization of the human good, and that is all that directly concerns the basic notion of sin, as should be clear from what has been said. This would remain true even were we to adopt a theological perspective, at least according to Aquinas, for (i. 1259–64: III. 122) it is only through an action contrary to the true human good — to what is good for the human being as human — that it is possible for a human being to offend God.[20] The basic question of 'sin' is a question of personal responsibility in the here and now, regardless of whether or not there is a life for the individual beyond the circumstances of present bodily existence.

In the catholic tradition, what are now popularly called the 'deadly' sins were called rather *peccata capitalia*, i.e., the chief sources of a sin-filled life.[21] 'The head [*caput*]', notes St. Thomas, 'properly speaking is that part of an animal which is the principal part directive of the whole animal. Whence metaphorically every beginning or principle is called a head. ... a sin is called capital from the word 'head' [*caput — capitale*] according as it metaphorically signifies a principle or thing directive of others'.[22] Capital sins become deadly, thus, not because every instance of them is 'mortal', but because of their tendency to govern by distorting the ways in which a human being seeks individual fulfillment in achieving the goods of this life.[23] Just as every being seeks the fulfillment proper to itself, so the human being seeks happiness in the goods proper to the

leading of a human life. And it is in this perspective of means to ends that, in catholic tradition, the so-called 'capital' or 'deadly' sins acquire species and number.[24]

Why are the 'deadly sins' seven in number?

This is quite an interesting point, but it has little to do with the fact that 'the number seven was considered special and sometimes sacred in the ancient world', as Schimmel (1992: 22) and others would suggest. In the list made of this matter by the monk who introduced the rules of Eastern monasticism to the West, John Cassian, c. 360–435, in his *Institutes* (i. 420–429: Book V, ch. 1, pp. 233–234), for example, there are eight principal obstacles to perfection, introduced as follows:

This fifth book of ours is now by the help of God to be produced. For after the four books which have been composed on the customs of the monasteries, we now propose, being strengthened by God through your prayers, to approach the struggle against the eight principal faults, i.e., first, Gluttony or the pleasures of the palate; secondly, Impurity; thirdly, Covetousness, which means Avarice, or, as it may more properly be called, the love of money; fourthly, Anger; fifthly, Dejection; sixthly, Sloth, which is heaviness or weariness of heart; seventhly, κενοδοξία, which means foolish or vain glory; eighthly, Pride.

Not only is the 'sin' of *tristitia* — dejection or sadness — included here, but vainglory is listed as distinct from pride, and envy is omitted,[25] thus making capital sins eight.[26] Cassian himself took the list from his teacher, Evagrius Ponticus, c. 345–399, who appears to have launched the tradition of discourse that has led to the present seminar with the following remark (Evagrius 1970 [c. 383]: 16)[27]:

There are eight general and basic categories of thoughts in which are included every thought. First is that of gluttony, then impurity, avarice, sadness, anger, sloth, vainglory, and last of all, pride. It is not in our power to decide whether we are disturbed by these thoughts, but it is up to us to decide if they are to linger within us or not and whether or not they are to stir up our passions.

Later lists, of course, will collapse pride and vainglory into one; but St. Thomas points out that they are truly distinct. Pride is the source of all sins, but especially of vainglory, pride being, strictly speaking, an inordinate desire for excellence, vainglory being an inordinate desire for outward recognition.[28] Thus, perhaps because he views the question of the number of capital sins primarily in terms of behavior rather than as simple interior attitudes or states (from which point of view, as he

carefully notes, all the sins can be reduced to modalities of pride), in his own enumeration St. Thomas Aquinas joins later tradition in effectively equivalating the two. For in behavior *inanis gloria* is what *superbia* most directly gives rise to — i.e., vainglory, as the outward manifestation through which the presence of pride is most directly manifested, is something a spiritual director (or, in general, any astute observer) can discern.[29] Why, then, after all, are the 'deadly' sins seven, rather than five or eight or nine?

The best answer to this question worked out among the Latins was reached by looking at the matter from the point of view of the interrelation of goals aimed at, on the ground that the principal vices (or 'habits of sin') must be identified in terms of the principal ways in which desire is incited. Directly and essentially, a good stimulates desire as something to be sought, an evil as something to be avoided. Indirectly, one might pursue an evil because of a good connected thereto, or flee some good by reason of a connected evil. It is according to this distinction that medieval catholic tradition concluded that principal vices which express disorders of self-love are sevenfold, as follows.

In the case of humans, the good directly stimulates desire in a threefold way: on the part of the mind (the good of reputation or fame), on the part of the body itself (either as to be preserved or to be multiplied), or in terms of the physical circumstances of life. Thus, there is the good of public perception or appreciation of our person, which, inordinately sought, is called *inanis gloria* or *superbia* — vain glory or pride; there is the good of food and drink essential to individual survival which, inordinately sought, is called *gula* or gluttony; there is the bodily good of pleasure connected with procreation, which, inordinately sought, is called *luxuria* or lust; and there is the good of material possessions which, inordinately pursued, is called *avaritia* — greed or avarice. Indirectly, the good to be attained can inspire *acedia* or laziness because of the exertion required of an individual; or it can inspire *invidia* or envy because the good is perceived as possessed by another;[30] or it can inspire *ira* or ire — wrath or fury — against the person other than oneself perceived as possessing the excellence the self desires for itself, and hence the desire to punish or harm that other as a kind of revenge for having an excellence that one envies or begrudges.

The last of these fonts of sin, *ira*, normally translated simply as 'anger', needs to be more carefully understood. In catholic tradition, and, before that, in the tradition of the Greek Fathers (of which I have so far made no mention and which I do not so much as undertake indirectly to define), *ira* was a phenomenon of three species or levels of intensity,[31] of which, as far as I understand the issue, only the third can be identified

with the *peccatum capitale* designated *ira*. It is clearly not *fel*, the irascible temperament called by the medievals 'choleric'. Nor is it *mania*, the nursing of injuries that we find in bitter and indignant people. This leaves *furor*, i.e., wrathful or rancorous anger, that form of irritation which knows no rest short of vengeance on the person or persons against whom it is directed.

We may thus represent the rationale yielding the capital sins as seven in the following schema:

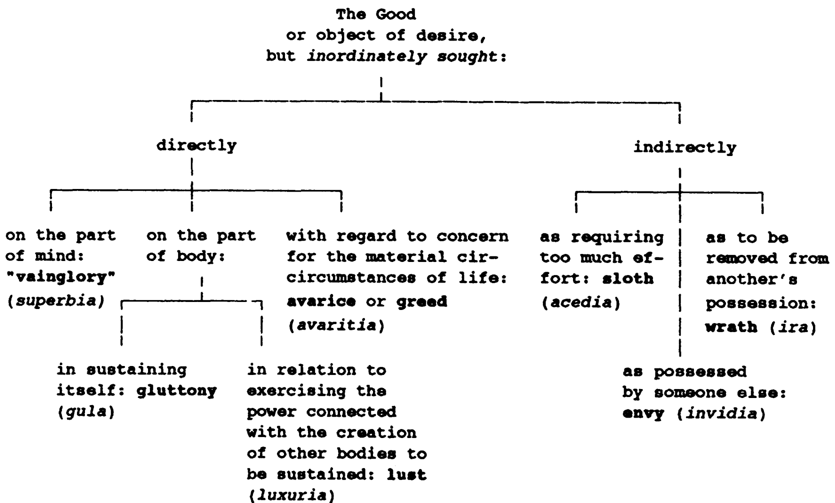

Figure 1. *Schema of Aquinas's rationale for the number of 'deadly sins' being seven*

The seven 'deadly' sins, in short, are simply the *seven probabilities* according to which we — you and I — are most likely to destroy ourselves over the course of a lifetime in pursuit of the human good, bearing in mind that, as Kinkead put it (1891: 74), 'some are guilty of one of them, some of two, some of three, but few if any are guilty of them all'. This variability obtains because different individuals attach greater or lesser importance to the various dimensions of the human good. For some, achievement and reputation are all-important; for others, reputation for ability counts for nothing in comparison to the possession of material goods; for yet others, bodily pleasures, whether gustative or reproductive, become a ruling passion. The ruling passion determines to which of the seven sins we are most at risk in our lifestyle.

Historically, the idea of the capital sins in their familiar sevenfold listing traces back to the first monk who became a pope in the Christian community, namely, St. Gregory the Great, c. 540–604. Gregory took

the list as originally drawn up in the context of Eastern monasticism — directly from John Cassian, indirectly from Cassian's teacher, Evagrius Ponticus, as noted above — and modified it, separating *superbia* from the list as the root of all sin but substituting *inanis gloria* in *superbia*'s place (see notes 26 and 28), dropping *tristitia* (which, however, remains in the background of anger and sloth), and adding envy (*invidia*).

Now why was the list modified in just these ways, dropping two (*superbia* and *tristitia*) and adding one (envy)? We have already discussed the reason for considering pride adequately represented behaviorally by vain glory. A ready conjecture for the neglect of Evagrius Ponticus and Cassian to enumerate envy springs from the fact that the desert monks of the East lived primarily in solitude. It is difficult to envy what another has if one rarely sees another. In Gregory's West, by contrast, monasticism tended to be communal. Whence a difference between covetousness and avarice, rather than — as occurred to Cassian — a reducibility of the former to the latter, would at once appear in the objective sphere or Umwelt of monastic social interactions. Gregory's list, thus, with the addition of envy, makes explicit a distinction not noted at all by Evagrius Ponticus and noted only blurringly by Cassian (covetousness vs. avarice). Gregory, in effect, with the subtraction from the list of *superbia* as such, differentiates the trunk from its branches. For in *superbia* he locates the interior attitude grounding all the sins, as distinct from *inanis gloria* as the empty seeking of reputation which is only the prime *behavioral manifestation* of pride as such. The subtraction of *tristitia* can best be explained, I would guess (as suggested in passing above), in terms of the later scholastic psychology of the passions.

But the rationale underlying all three of the modifications resulting in the now-classical enumeration of seven 'deadly' sins would not become fully apparent until the later discussions of the scholastics, which enabled such a schema as we have drawn above. Alike in the earliest formulations of Ponticus, Cassian, and Gregory, we do not yet find a clear and explicit rationale for the order and number of the *peccata capitalia*. Their discussions amounted to a practical psychology developed from the desert fathers for dealing with the problems of spiritual development. In the middle ages, the *Conferences* of Cassian were the favorite reading of Dominic, c. 1170–1221, founder of the religious order to which St. Thomas Aquinas belonged. And, as detailed in note 23 above, in the classic of mystical theology, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (a. 1585), St. John of the Cross (1542–1591) organizes his opening chapters around the idea of the capital sins metaphoricized in terms of purely spiritual goods.[32]

You can see, therefore, even from the beginning outside the Western tradition, that the 'capital' or 'deadly' sins tie in very closely with the

basic catholic idea of sin as a deliberate and unnecessary compromise of the human good. The whole point of the traditional development of the 'deadly' sins in this framework was precisely to guide the individual in the right exercise of human freedom in relation to the goods of human life, and this discussion remains no less relevant today than it was in the early Greek and medieval Latin centuries.

Re-framing the basic notions from Catholic tradition

Indeed, we may say that, with the newly minted notion of 'social sin', the traditional analyses take on a new interest and importance, provided we can begin the discussion over, as it were, starting from the basic notion of personal responsibility for developing our talents in ways that realize what is best in those talents as ours and, as a consequence, in ways that contribute to society (i.e., *human* society, the realm of anthropos, wherein alone the *bonum honestum* is verifiable). In short, our responsibility as human persons is for pursuing our own development and interests in ways that are not at variance with the spiritual requirements both individual and social of the human good as something to be advanced and embodied culturally in institutions as well as psychologically in the individual. It is a question of objectification, the most comprehensive and fundamental objectification that falls, however fitfully, within our grasp. The notion of sin in general is nothing more than the 'flip side' of this discussion, and the notion of the capital or 'deadly' sins in particular is an illumination of the principal ways an individual — depending on his or her temperament and priorities — is likely to go astray in the pursuit of the human good.

Sin as an offense against the human good

Taking a cue from the middle ages, I suggest that we should begin with St. Thomas Aquinas's idea that the universe exists in such a way that it is impossible for human beings to commit an offense against God except by acting contrary to their own good. Also, the idea is rooted in the Gospel according to Matthew (i. 40–50: 25.31–46, esp. 40 and 45), where the final judgment of human beings is made on the basis of what was done or neglected to be done to the least of the human community. In this I agree fully with Schoonenberg's answer to the question: What is sin directed against?

People today, he notes (1970: 88), 'react with some justification against the notion of sin in earlier generations, which defined it as "a deliberate transgression of the law of God". This concept can and must be modified from many aspects'. The principal modifications, as Schoonenberg sees it, and with which I would agree were I to view the matter as a theologian (which I do not), are twofold. First (1970: 88):

God's law is identical with the demands which His creation and salvation make upon us — demands which are identical with creation and salvation themselves. From this we deduce that sin is against men. Sinful man offends what is demanded by his and his neighbour's being.

This point was already made by Aquinas, who yet immediately deferred to the authority of Augustine in emphasizing rather the aspect of the matter that, by acting contrary to the human good, we *also* offend against God.[33] What is the good for human beings is something to which experience is pertinent and about which reason has considerable competence to penetrate. Reason is based on experience and takes experience as its measure, not simply in sensory experiments here and now but as an historical growth in time whereby lessons are learned from experiments in governance and social structure as well as in physical aspects of the environment. The whole of human experience, meaning custom, tradition, and civil life as well as sensory observation of the physical environment, is the measure and ground of rational discourse.[34] This is what Peirce meant by 'pragmaticism' as a methodological idea new in philosophy, and what semiotics means for philosophical tradition no less in metaphysics and epistemology than in the philosophy of nature.[35]

Sin as a falling short

The second point Schoonenberg makes takes account of the human condition as what we now know to be an evolutionary or developmental situation, a rise from a more primitive and indeed prehuman state, rather than a fall from some imaginary perfection prior to all history. Thus the demands of the true human good upon the individual and upon society and the *genus humanis* as a lifeform on this planet, Schoonenberg notes (1970: 88),

must not be understood statically, a danger which goes with the concept of 'natural law'. It is the nature of man to be a person who programmes and constructs himself in history. Hence good and evil cannot be deduced from the tendencies of human nature, where this is contrasted with his personal being. Sin

is rather a refusal of the call, of our future, as it is in history. Rather than define sin as the transgression of a law, we might call it the refusal to commit ourselves in a history ....

'Original sin' as the condition of moral blindness

While, in the eyes of many, the notion of 'original sin' as a 'fall' from an earlier condition of human perfection has been discredited by historical reason (as conditioned by biological science in particular), and seems destined for desuetude as an instrument of useful analysis even for the theologian making use of reason, the recent reinterpretations of 'original sin'[36] as identical with the historical burden of the human condition as a development in time actually take on a vivified credibility once the issue of personal responsibility is seen in the light not only of individual behavior but of the social consequences of such behavior.

Let us take a simple case. Today there is a consensus that slavery is a moral evil. There are no human persons who can legitimately be enslaved and reduced to the civil status of the property of others. This consensus is contrary to the opinion of Aristotle, who taught that some people are natural slaves and peoples conquered in war can be legitimately enslaved; it is contrary to the opinion of the zealot Paul who held slaves obliged to accept their condition and obey their masters;[37] it is contrary to the views of St. Thomas Aquinas and the medieval church;[38] and it is contrary to the views of most of the Protestant churches, at least in their first two centuries of 'revolt'. If it is true that slavery is morally wrong, then the common recognition that it is wrong is an advance in human consciousness over the more long-prevailing view that slavery, in itself, is morally acceptable. Now how such an advance came about is an interesting subject. But regardless of the answer to that question, which would require volumes, we have no trouble holding that, from our perspective in which slavery appears clearly as a moral evil, it has to be said that Aristotle, Paul, Aquinas, and the rest who upheld slavery in good faith were, insofar as they so argued, morally blind.

The semiotic notion of Umwelt becomes relevant here. The Umwelt, as is commonly known, is the objective world in which each species lives as including those aspects of the physical environment of which the organism is biologically equipped to become cognizant simply as part of the total network of relations within which alone the objective world (in its difference from the physical being of the environment as such, which is not species-specific but common to all life forms) has meaning and value embodied in its physical aspects. From the point of view of the

physical being of the environment taken as such, we do not see what is before us simply, and so do not respond to what is there physically as such but rather to what is there objectively.[39]

In the case of the human Umwelt, however, this simple biological situation is compounded as a moral situation. That is to say, 'what is there objectively' is not simply a matter of the proportion between our biological heritage and the physical properties of our environmental surroundings; 'what is there objectively', beginning with language itself, is in some measure a product of human society as a historical residue of individually free choices and acts — a 'freely chosen reality', in Powell's pungent expression (1983). Ethics can be totally empirical precisely because the human Umwelt has, within its objective structures which are other than the physical structures of environmental being, not only those which are determined by the biological heritage, but also those which are determined by the cultural heritage and which are linguistically mediated within anthropic society. From this point of view, i.e., insofar as it is a question of viewing the objective world as it includes aspects of structure determined by past exercises of human freedom, often enough, as Gula says (1989: 115), 'we do not see what is before us rightly, and so do not respond to what is really there'.

The medieval thinker, like St. Paul before him, viewing slavery, did not respond to what was really there, namely, a moral evil — an unnecessary and avoidable compromising of the human good. Instead, the religious leadership saw only an institution which, regardless of their personal attitude or feelings, fell well within the purview of 'divine permission'. This perspective was socially sustained well into modern times, as illustrated in the following remarks touching the subject of slavery in a letter dated March 10, 1841, from Matthias Loras, Bishop of Dubuque, to an unnamed friend (excerpt from the *Letters* of Matthias Loras, Bishop of Dubuque, manuscript in preparation for publication by Robert F. Klein):

At Saint Mary I confirmed forty-five persons, all French, including some male and female Negro slaves; for slavery is maintained here, as in exactly one-half of the United States. And it is the policy of the country to have as many states retaining slavery as there are states which do not hold on to it. So, for example, my Iowa, which is happily free, will be elevated to statehood at the same time as Florida, which is a slave territory. In this way balance is retained for the security of the republic, which numbers three million slaves out of sixteen million inhabitants. The discretion of the missionaries on the subject of slavery is great, whereas Protestant ministers often stir up trouble when they are noticeably abolitionists. The Catholics here are what they have always been—friends of peace and order. They permit whatever God allows, and thereby win the confidence of the

Protestants, who have come better disposed to enter the bosom of a Church so prudent and so antagonistic to all excess.

There are countless other examples of past moral blindness respecting objective situations accepted as good and normal, such as the use of castrati in the papal choir in renaissance times; Chinese footbinding; the burning in India of young widows; etc. (Nor would present examples be wanting, if only we had eyes to see!) That it is possible for individual human beings to be morally blind in this or that action is beyond doubt. Beyond doubt also is the possibility for whole societies and historical periods to be morally blind in this or that arena of human action. If 'original sin' be taken to be the condition of moral blindness typical of any given society and into which its youth are born, socialized, and enculturated, then we of a certainty recover some substance in the notion.

Social sin: A changing field of vision

Individual actions not only have consequences for ourselves in determining the kind of person we become; they also have consequences for others in determining the sort of society to which our person contributes. And the particular society into which we are enculturated through language determines much about our individual actions. Considered in the context of the interdependence of human individuals sustained by their interactions which are, in each case, rooted in individual actions as framed by institutions, the notion of 'social sin' introduced above mediates between 'personal sin' as a matter of individual responsibility and 'original sin' as a condition of moral blindness (certainly we are neither conceived nor born with comprehensive moral insight). For this condition we have no responsibility in this or that particular, but we *can become* responsible for it *to the degree* and *in the manner* that we become aware of how the world as we influence it could indeed be made otherwise and better for future generations of human beings if we act in a new way rather than accept the ways we have been taught and to which we have become by habit accustomed. Gula (1989: 119–120) describes this mediating role of the notion of social sin in relating personal sin to original sin as follows:

> Social sin reflects the dialectal nature of human existence: freedom [the realm of personal responsibility] and fate [the realm of antecedent biological and cultural heritage]. ... through our freedom we create society by embodying meaning and value in social structures. For example, economic structures ... educational structures ... and ecclesial structures ... are all embodiments of meaning and value.

These structures in turn affect us through the process of socialization to limit our freedom, but not to determine it completely. As a result, what we see, what we think, what we believe, what we value, and what we do depend a great deal on the social context of our lives. By participating in these structures we sustain them and help to produce their effects, whether we want to or not.

Summing up

We are born into a world we did not create. To the extent that this world contains unnecessary evils we are taught to accept as normal, we are born into a condition of 'original sin' which is inseparable from our heritage as human. To the extent that we become aware of unnecessary evils as such and see ways in which particular ones might be reduced or eliminated, we become guilty of 'social sin' by failing to take whatever action is actually within our power to take.[40] The 'deadly sins' of tradition define the principal ways and reasons we are likely personally to fail to act as the situation of the human good demands, once we have overcome any particular aspect of the moral blindness which is our particular heritage as finite centers of freedom in a world objective as well as physical.

The concept of original sin reminds us that ours is not the power or knowledge to make an absolutely perfect world; the concept of social sin reminds us that we have it in our power to make an always imperfect human condition relatively better; the concept of personal sin reminds us that the individual makes a difference; and the concept of 'deadly sins' reminds us that, if we do not work personally to improve the human situation — both individual and social — we will assuredly contribute to its deterioration.

Because they study semiosis, for semioticians, things tend to come in threes. Original sin, personal sin, and social sin form a triad, whose semiosis has seven dimensions in relation to the ways the human good is pursued. Sin *sub specie semioticarum* appears at the interstices of the objective structures which define the difference, in any given case, and at each moment of ongoing transformation, between, on one side, an Umwelt which is biologically determined by the proportion between genetic heritage and physical environment and, on the other side, a Lebenswelt which is an Umwelt made human by the action of signs in creating species-specifically human language and, through language, that whole panoply of postlinguistic structures we call civilization and culture. The human good alone provides the measure, through experience and reason, according to which pragmaticism is obliged to take account of

sin as a phenomenon of evil, both in those aspects which exceed our control (or even our awareness), and in those aspects for which we bear personal responsibility. And, as always in semiosis, the boundary line dividing the aspects in question is ever shifting, which is why there is no rest for the wicked.

Appendix 1.

The Eight Kinds of Evil Thoughts
by Evagrius Ponticus (c. 383: 16–20)
the original text from which Cassian (i. 419–426) introduced the subject to the West, in the translation of J. E. Bamberger

6. There are eight general and basic categories of thoughts in which are included every thought. First is that of gluttony, then impurity, avarice, sadness, anger, sloth, vainglory, and last of all, pride. It is not in our power to decide whether we are disturbed by these thoughts, but it is up to us to decide if they are to linger within us or not and whether or not they are to stir up our passions.

7. The thought of gluttony suggests to the monk that he give up his ascetic efforts in short order. It brings to his mind concern for his stomach, for his liver and spleen, the thought of a long illness, scarcity of the commodities of life and finally of his edematous body and the lack of care by the physicians. These things are depicted vividly before his eyes. It frequently brings him to recall certain ones among the brethren who have fallen upon such sufferings. There even comes a time when it persuades those who suffer from such maladies to visit those who are practicing a life of abstinence and to expose their misfortune and relate how these came about as a result of the ascetic life.

8. The demon of impurity impels one to lust after bodies. It attacks more strenuously those who practice continence, in the hope that they will give up their practice of this virtue, feeling that they gain nothing by it. This demon has a way of bowing the soul down to practices of an impure kind, defiling it, and causing it to speak and hear certain words almost as if the reality were actually present to be seen.

9. Avarice suggests to the mind a lengthy old age, inability to perform manual labor (at some future date), famines that are sure to come, sickness that will visit us, the pinch of poverty, the great shame that comes from accepting the necessities of life from others.

10. Sadness tends to come up at times because of the deprivations of one's desires. On other occasions it accompanies anger. When it arises from the deprivation of desires it takes place in the following manner. Certain thoughts first drive the soul to the memory of home or parents, or else to that of one's former life. Now when these thoughts find that the soul offers no resistance but rather follows after them and pours itself out in pleasures that are still only mental in nature, they then seize her and drench her in sadness, with the result that these ideas she was just indulging no longer remain. In fact they cannot be had in reality, either, because of her present way of life. So the miserable soul is now shriveled up in

her humiliation to the degree that she poured herself out upon those thoughts of hers.

11. The most fierce passion is anger. In fact it is defined as a boiling and stirring up of wrath against one who has given injury — or is thought to have done so. It constantly irritates the soul and above all at the time of prayer it seizes the mind and flashes the picture of the offensive person before one's eyes. Then there comes a time when it persists no longer, is transformed into indignation, stirs up alarming experiences by night. This is succeeded by a general debility of the body, malnutrition with its attendant pallor, and the illusion of being attacked by poisonous wild beasts. These four last mentioned consequences following upon indignation may be found to accompany many thoughts.

12. The demon of *acedia* — also called the noonday demon[41] — is the one that causes the most serious trouble of all. He presses his attack upon the monk about the fourth hour and besieges the soul until the eighth hour. First of all he makes it seem that the sun barely moves, if at all, and that the day is fifty hours long. Then he constrains the monk to look constantly out the windows, to walk outside the cell, to gaze carefully at the sun to determine how far it stands from the ninth hour, to look now this way and now that to see if perhaps [one of the brethren appears from his hermitage]. Then too he instills in the heart of the monk a hatred for the place, a hatred for his very life itself, a hatred for manual labor. He leads him to reflect that charity has departed from among the brethren, that there is no one to give encouragement. Should there be someone at this period who happens to offend him in some way or other, this too the demon uses to contribute further to his hatred. This demon drives him along to desire other sites where he can more easily procure life's necessities, more readily find work and make a real success of himself. He goes on to suggest that, after all, it is not the place that is the basis of pleasing the Lord. God is to be adored everywhere. He joins to these reflections the memory of his dear ones and of his former way of life. He depicts life stretching out for a long period of time, and brings before the mind's eye the toil of the ascetic struggle and, as the saying has it, leaves no leaf unturned to induce the monk to forsake his cell and drop out of the fight. No other demon follows close upon the heels of this one (when he is defeated) but only a state of deep peace and inexpressible joy arise out of this struggle.

13. The spirit of vainglory is most subtle and it readily grows up in the souls of those who practice virtue. It leads them to desire to make their struggles known publicly, to hunt after the praise of men. This in turn leads to their illusory healing of women, or to their hearing fancied sounds as the cries of the demons — crowds of people who touch their clothes. This demon predicts besides that they will attain to the priesthood. It has men knocking at the door, seeking audience with them. If the monk does not willingly yield to their request, he is bound and led away. When in this way he is carried aloft by vain hope, the demon vanishes and the monk is left to be tempted by the demon of pride or of sadness who brings upon him thoughts opposed to his hopes. It also happens at times that a man who a short while before was a holy priest, is led off bound and is handed over to the demon of impurity to be sifted by him.

14. The demon of pride is the cause of the most damaging fall for the soul. For it induces the monk to deny that God is his helper and to consider that he himself is the cause of virtuous actions. Further, he gets a big head in regard to the brethren, considering them stupid because they do not all have this same opinion of him. Anger and sadness follow on the heels of this demon, and last of all there comes in its train the greatest of maladies — derangement of mind, associated with wild ravings and hallucinations of whole multitudes of demons in the sky.

Notes

1. Quoted from the Edict in Durant 1957: 363.
2. E.g., see my remarks on Saussure and semiotics (Deely 1995).
3. Part of this background, however, is the transition of early Christianity from a diversity of local churches to a centralized doctrinal authority proposing a propositional criterion of orthodox belief, a transition marked by the Council of Nicea and its Creed (325 A.D.).

   Going into the fourth century, 'Christian' and 'Catholic' seem to have been virtual synonyms in the Roman world: see Gibbon 1781a, the title of ch. 20: 'The Motives, Progress, and Effects of the Conversion of Constantine—Legal Establishment and Constitution of the Christian, or Catholic Church'. For the usage of the Latin term *catholicus*, see 1781a: p. 340n102 (referring to 321 A.D.), and ch. 21, p. 397n135; for the usage of the Greek term καθολικῆς (also around 321 A.D.) see ch. 20, p. 308n7.

   But the great theological debates over the triune nature of God that preceded the Nicene Creed continued up to the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.), which completed — as Gibbon put it (1781a: ch. 27, p. 156) — 'the theological system which had been established in the Council of Nice' by extending and transferring 'by a natural analogy, to the *Third* person of the Trinity' the various opinions of Nice 'reembraced concerning the *Second*'. And in this interim the Emperor Theodosius (reigned 379–395) entered, in the form of an Imperial Edict dated February 28, 380 A.D., what can be seen in retrospect as an ominous adumbration of the more narrow, purely sectarian and adversative use of the term 'Catholic' as it came to dominate modern times (Codex Theodos. 1. xvi. tit. i. leg. 2, as cited in Gibbon 1781b: ch. 27, pp. 148–149):

   It is our pleasure that all the nations which are governed by our clemency and moderation should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans; which faithful tradition has preserved; and which is now professed by the pontiff Damasus, and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the discipline of the apostles and the doctrine of the gospel, let us believe the sole deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; under an equal majesty and a pious Trinity. *We authorize the followers of this doctrine to assume the title of Catholic Christians; and as we judge that all others are extravagant madmen, we brand them with the infamous name of Heretics*; and declare their conventicles shall no longer usurp the respectable appellation of churches. Besides the condemnation of divine justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authority, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict upon them.

   Such a declaration, coming from an absolute head of state, should serve as a stark reminder of the importance both of subordinating the head of state to a constitutional law protecting the rights of citizens as human beings and of separating church from state in the affairs of civil life — a twin lesson still only imperfectly learned even today,

and notwithstanding the evangelical exhortation not to give to Caesar the things which are God's (such as, pre-eminently, the conscience and thought of the individual human being in the working out of systems of belief).

4. Let me cite on this point one of the more striking passages in Sebeok (1988 [1987]: 24) which bears on the shaping of semiotic consciousness in its major tradition:

   Language is itself properly speaking a secondary modeling system, not a primary modeling system, by virtue of the all but singular fact that it incorporates a syntactic component, while there are as far as we know no other zoosemiotic systems that do so, although this feature does abound in endosemiotic systems such as the genetic code, the immune code, the metabolic code, and the neural code. Syntax makes it possible for hominids not only to represent immediate reality ... but also uniquely to frame an indefinite number of possible worlds .... Thus is man able to fabricate a tertiary modeling system of the sort that John Tylor Bonner calls 'true culture', by which he means a system of representing all the subtleties of language, in contrast to nonhuman culture, and thereby produce what the Moscow-Tartu group has traditionally been calling a secondary modeling system.

   What I am really saying ... is that the primary-secondary is not enough. You have to have the nonverbal, the verbal, and then the superstructures which these people call secondary which we call civilization.

   Or, in another terminology (Deely 1982 and 1994a), prelinguistic, linguistic, and postlinguistic structures.

5. Aquinas i. 1269–1270: I–II. 71. art. 6 ad 4: 'Dicendum quod, cum dicitur quod non omne peccatum ideo est malum quia est prohibitum, intelligitur de prohibitione facta per ius positivum. Si autem referatur ad ius naturale, quod continetur primo quidem in lege aeterna, secundario vero in naturali iudicatorio rationis humanae, tunc omne peccatum est malum quia prohibitum: ex hoc enim ipso quod est inordinatum, iuri naturali repugnat'. (Here Aquinas anticipates — and better expresses — Voltaire's idea that 'laws watch over known crimes, religion' — or, perhaps we could better say, morality — 'over secret crimes'.)
6. Aquinas I–II, q. 77, art. 4c: 'Propria et per se causa peccati accipienda est ex parte conversionis ad commutabile bonum; ex qua quidem parte omnis actus peccati procedit ex aliquo inordinato appetitu alicuius temporalis boni. Quod autem aliquis appetat inordinate aliquod temporale bonum, procedit ex hoc quod inordinate amat seipsum: hoc enim est amare aliquem, velle ei bonum. Unde manifestum est quod inordinatus amor sui est causa omnis peccati'.
7. It must be said that the official catechism just issued under the authority of Pope John Paul II (1994: ¶1849), as perhaps befits a pope who began as a philosopher, begins with a more complex mixture of philosophy and theology in its initial characterization of the nature of sin than has been common in recent centuries in the simpler and more strictly theological presentation for catechesis: 'Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as ...' — and here this newest 'catechism' repeats Augustine's classical definition taken up in our next paragraph of main text above. And, in ¶1850, this new catechism returns straightforwardly to the traditional line: 'Sin is an offense against God'.
8. But see Note 17 below.
9. Augustine c. 397: *Contra Faust.* liber XXII, c. 27: ML 42, 418: 'Peccatum est dictum vel factum vel concupitum contra legem aeternam'.

10. Aquinas i. 1269–70: I–II. q. 71. art. 6 ad 5: 'Dicendum quod a theologis consideratur peccatum praecipue secundum quod est offensa contra Deum: a philosopho autem morali, secundum quod contrariatur rationi. Et ideo Augustinus convenientius definit peccatum ex hoc quod est contra legem aeternam, quam ex hoc quod est contra rationem: praecipue cum per legem aeternam regulemur in multis quae excedunt rationem humanam, sicut in his quae sunt fidei'.
11. Gibbon calls it a 'favourite opinion' of the Church fathers (1776–1777: ch. 15, 38 39):

    The chaste severity of the fathers, in whatever related to the commerce of the two sexes, flowed from the same principle; their abhorrence of every enjoyment which might gratify the sensual, and degrade the spiritual, nature of man. It was their favourite opinion that, if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he would have lived for ever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled paradise with a race of innocent and immortal beings.

    He notes, in particular, that 'Justin, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, &c., strongly inclined to this opinion'.
12. The original Apostles were those twelve who knew Jesus Christ in person and were chosen by him to form an inner circle of followers. Paul never met Christ, and so was not and could not be part of the original group strictly and properly called Apostles. This was a title that he appropriated to himself, not a title that he actually holds on equal terms with Peter and the rest.
13. Thus, as has long been known (see Doane 1882) we find parallels of the Christian Eden and Fall myth in almost all folklore (Egyptian, Indian, Tibetan, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Polynesian, Mexican).

    Most of these Edens had forbidden trees, and were supplied with serpents or dragons that stole immortality from men, or otherwise poisoned Paradise. Both the serpent and the fig were probably phallic symbols; behind the myth is the thought that sex and knowledge destroy innocence and happiness, and are the origin of evil; ... In most of these stories woman was the lovely-evil agent of the serpent or the devil, whether as Eve, or Pandora, or the Poo See of Chinese legend. 'All things', says the *Shi-ching*, 'were at first subject to man, but a woman threw us into slavery. Our misery came not from heaven but from woman; she lost the human race. Ah, unhappy Poo See! Thou kindled the fire that consumes us, and which is every day increasing ... . The world is lost. Vice overflows all things' (Durant 1935: 329–330).

    Similarly for the story of Noah's Ark, i.e., the great flood.

    While it is no doubt true of these great origin and turning point myths of the divers civilizations that 'their substance', as Durant put it (1935: 329–330), 'is not the tales they tell but the judgments they convey as allegorical moral vehicles', it is hardly 'to put a trivial and superficial question', or even quite the same question, as Durant alleges, 'to ask whether these stories are true or false', on the one hand, or 'whether they "really happened"', on the other hand. Cf. Note 14.
14. Rahner 1969: 331:

    Original sin (already taught at the Council of Carthage, A.D. 418: *D* 101 ff.; cf. also *D* 174f.) was treated in detail and in doctrinal definition by the Council of Trent (*D* 787–92): existence of a personal actual sin of the first man, by which his original holiness and righteousness was lost, which brought about in him the domination of the devil and death and which brought him into a worse condition in body and soul; he lost precisely this holiness and righteousness for us also, so that consequently not only death but also sin (as habitual) passed to all men; this inherited sin (which is inherited through common descent, not by imitation) is in origin one, but is truly

proper to each and is only removed by Christ's redemption, so that for this reason the baptism of infants is important for salvation; the stain of guilt of original sin is not identical with concupiscence since this remains in those who are justified.

See Note 13 on origin and turning point myths parallelling specifically Christian versions of same.

15. Gula 1989. Further in Henriot 1980.
16. See my essay on 'Evolution and ethics' (Deely 1973).
17. Note the advance in consciousness on this point of the formula for sin in the 1884 *Baltimore Catechism* over Augustine's classical fourth century formulation, cited respectively in paragraphs 1 and 2 opening my third section, 'Framing the basic notion ...'.
18. Applicable here is the medieval notion of *superbia vitae* as the vice which besets the Nietzschean 'superman' and, in general, all those who hold that 'great men' are not bound by the same moral rules as shackle ordinary mortals.
19. John 5: 16–17: 'If anybody sees his brother commit a sin that is not a deadly sin, he has only to pray, and God will give life to the sinner — not those who commit a deadly sin; for there is a sin that is death, and I will not say that you must pray about that. Every kind of wrong-doing is sin, but not all sin is deadly'. But the commentaries seem unable to fathom the exact reference of John's ominous remark, which would seem to exceed the degree of malice even of what later came to be termed 'mortal' sin, in that to hold those seen to commit an action theologically categorized as a mortal sin as ones not to be prayed for is not part of any mainstream theological tradition.
20. Aquinas i. 1259–1264: *Summa contra gentiles*, III. 121: 'Non videtur autem esse responsio sufficiens si quis dicat quod facit iniuriam Deo. Non enim Deus a nobis offenditur nisi ex eo quod contra nostrum bonum agimus'.
21. This is still the designation they receive in the latest official *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994). Thus Schimmel (1992: 22) proposes that 'the expression "seven deadly sins" is actually a misnomer that resulted from popular confounding of mortal sins with capital or cardinal sins. The seven deadly sins can be mortal or venial. The correct designation of them is the seven cardinal, capital, or chief sins, but we retain the popular usage'.

    Fine as far as they go, these remarks are yet too facile, for they remain at the level of a conjecture which gives no antecedent sources actually illustrating the origin of the usage that has become 'popular' as opposed to 'proper'. I would like to find the beginning of the usage 'deadly' in this connection, which I have so far traced back no further than the 1930s (see note 23), although it is easy to form an abduction as to its original application to the matter. Bloomfield, who takes as his title *The Seven Deadly Sins*, yet admits in his preface (1952: vii) that 'the expression "deadly" is an inexact designation of the concept which is the subject of this book'. Without answering my question about the actual origin of the use of the term 'deadly' in treatments of the capital sins, Bloomfield at least sketches nicely the scope of the problem (1952: xiii):

    The seven cardinal sins have had a long history. They arose, in proto-form at least, in Gnostic speculations and Hellenistic astral science, in the centuries immediately preceding and following Christ, and even today continue to exercise a diminishing but still strong influence on the popular imagination. A long trail may be followed from Horace and Hermes to Huneker and Huxley, not to mention the more intricate path of the concept through the theologies of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. A study of the social and intellectual aspects of the Sins provides a commentary on the changes in the climate of opinion over two thousand years. The concept was at

first allied to the religious and scientific yearnings of mankind which preceded the adoption of Christianity by the Western world. The desire to find valid correspondences in the universe, to give rational meaning to the apparently meaningless chaos of the universe, may be seen in the prehistory of the concept. Purged of its pagan associations, the classification was taken over by the ascetics who sought God in the solitudes of the Egyptian desert. Carried to the West by John Cassian in the fifth century, incorporated into official Catholic teaching by Gregory the Great in the seventh, and spread by the penitential books, the Sins became an important part of medieval Catholicism. They formed an element of that spiritual unity which persisted for centuries, before it was finally broken down by nationalism, schism, and science.

22. i.1269–1270: I–II, q. 84. art. 3:

    Dicendum quod *capitale* a capite dicitur. Caput autem proprie quidem est quoddam membrum animalis, quod est principium et directivum totius animalis. Unde metaphorice omne principium caput vocatur: et etiam homines qui alios dirigunt et gubernant, capita aliorum dicuntur. Dicitur ergo vitium capitale uno modo a capite proprie dicto: et secundum hoc, peccatum capitale dicitur peccatum quod capitis poena punitur. Sed sic nunc non intendimus de capitalibus peccatis: sed secundum quod alio modo dicitur peccatum capitale a capite prout metaphorice significat principium vel directivum aliorum. Et sic dicitur vitium capitale ex quo alia vitia oriuntur: et praecipue secundum originem causae finalis, quae est formalis origo, ut supra dictum est. Et ideo vitium capitale non solum est principium aliorum, sed etiam est directivum et quodammodo ductivum aliorum: semper enim ars vel habitus ad quem pertinet finis, principiatur et imperat circa ea quae sunt ad finem.

23. Cunningham (1959: 185): 'Their pre-eminence in evil is not based on their gravity (some are only venial by nature) but rather on their influence on the commission of other sins'. It is in this sense that E. Allison Peers, for example, in his translation of St. John of the Cross, introduces the adjective 'deadly' in connection with the capital sins. In his treatise on *The Dark Night of the Soul* (a. 1585), John of the Cross proposes to describe the problems of beginners in the spiritual life 'by reference to the seven capital sins, each in its turn' ('irémoslo notando por los siete vicios capitales, diciendo algunas ...'; Ch. 1, p. 331 in Peers trans., p. 422 in the Seneca Spanish edition). Thus Ch. 2 becomes 'Of certain spiritual imperfections which beginners have with respect to the habit of pride'; Ch. 3 'Of some imperfections which some of these souls are apt to have, with respect to the second capital sin, which is avarice, in the spiritual sense'; Ch. 4 'Of other imperfections which these beginners are apt to have with respect to the third sin, which is luxury'; Ch. 5 'Of the imperfections into which beginners fall with respect to the sin of wrath'; Ch. 6 'Of the imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony'; Ch. 7 'Of imperfections with respect to spiritual envy and sloth': see pp. 330–349 in the Peers trans., pp. 420–441 of the Seneca Spanish ed. Notice that what Peers renders as 'with respect to each of the deadly sins' in the opening sentence of Ch. 4 (p. 338) reads simply 'acerca de cada vicio' in the actual Spanish (p. 429). On first reading Peers's English I was led to believe that the popular usage of 'deadly' for the traditional 'capital' might trace back to as early as the sixteenth century; but the actual examination of John of the Cross's Spanish leaves me without present ground for that hypothesis, since the 'translation' on this point turned out to be an interpolation.

24. Precisely because the rationales in the two cases are so different, for example, Crews's attempt (1986: 145–153) neatly to juxtapose 'The seven capital or deadly sins' with 'The seven traditional virtues' (namely, faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude) falls flat.

25. This is according to Raymond Mortimer (1962: ix), although the assertion depends upon how one evaluates the Greek terms of Cassian's text, perhaps especially in the reduction of 'covetousness' simply to 'avarice' as love of money. Cf. the opinion expressed by some of Aquinas's principal editors in Note 26 below.
26. To Aquinas's remark (i. 1271–1272: 162 art. 8) that 'quiddam, considerantes superbiam secundum quod est quoddam speciale peccatum, connumeraverunt eam aliis vitiis capitalibus', his editors (see note 28 below) append the following note 10): 'Qui ita superbiam inter vitia capitalia commemoraverunt recensebant octo vitia capitalia; scilicet, superbiam, inanem gloriam, avaritiam, invidiam, iram, gulam, luxuriam, acediam. Ita Cassianus, Evagrius, sanctus Nilus et sanctus Ioannes Damascenus'. Gregory the Great himself, by contrast (Aquinas, i. 1271–1272: 162 art. 8), 'considerans universalem eius influentiam quam habet in omnia vitia, ut dictum est, non connumeravit eam [scil., superbiam] aliis capitalibus vitiis, sed posuit eam reginam omnium vitiorum et matrem'.
27. The complete text in which Evagrius discusses 'the eight kinds of evil thoughts' is so brief that, in view of its seminal role at the base of the Western theological discussion in the catholic tradition, I have included it as an Appendix to this article for the interest and convenience of the readers.
28. Aquinas i. 1271–1272: I–II. 162. art. 7 ad 2: 'Dicendum quod superbia non est idem inani gloriae, sed causa eius. Nam superbia inordinate excellentiam appetit: sed inanis gloria appetit excellentiae manifestationem'. Whence the editors of the text ('De Rubeis, Billuart, P. Faucher, et aliorum notis selectis ornata') append to this reply to objection two (see their following note 14): 'Nunc vero generaliter superbia ponitur pro inani gloria, quamvis inter se haec duo vitia dissentiant; ac proinde tantum septem vitia generalia recensentur'.
29. Aquinas, i. 1269–1270: 'Utrum convenienter dicantur septem vitia capitalia', I–II. 84. art. 4c: 'bonum praecipue movet appetitum ex hoc quod participat aliquid de proprietate felicitatis, quam naturaliter omnes appetunt. De cuius ratione est quidem primo quaedam perfectio, nam felicitas est perfectum bonum: ad quod pertinet excellentia vel claritas, quam appetit *superbia* vel *inanis gloria*'.
30. Here I should note the remarkable study of envy made from the point of view of the one who causes envy in others, and how to deal with that fact, namely the study of Van Kaam 1972.
31. Aquinas i. 1269–1270: I–II. 46. art. 8, referring to the classifications made by Gregory of Nyssa, c. 331–396, and John Damascene, c. 676–i. 754–767.
32. St. John of the Cross's description of envy is particularly noteworthy (a. 1585: 347) as the experience on the part of envious persons 'of displeasure at the spiritual good of others, which cause them a certain sensible grief at being outstripped upon this road, so that they would prefer not to hear others praised; for they become displeased at others' virtues and sometimes they cannot refrain from contradicting what is said in praise of them, depreciating it as far as they can; and their annoyance thereat grows because the same is not said of them, for they would fain be preferred in everything'.
33. In taking up Aquinas's original point of the difference between sin viewed philosophically and sin viewed theologically (in the i. 1269–1270 segment of his *Summa theologiae* I–II. q. 71. art. 6 ad 5, cited in note 10 above), we are also taking up again the threads of a discussion initiated in Latin catholic tradition by such authors as Marsilius of Padua (1324), described by Bourke as follows (1966: 63): 'What is happening in the fourteenth century is actually a continuation of a revolution in medieval thinking on human tendencies, appetites, and ends. Marsilius appears to revive something of the internal finality which we noticed in Aristotle's biological works. Man's natural desire is transposed to a common will of the people for a not-yet-existing end, for a goal

which does not influence the will by final causality but which is, instead, efficiently projected as an end by collective human desires'.

The original discussion along the lines suggested by Aquinas's distinction between sin viewed philosophically and sin viewed theologically, however, came a cropper over the failure of the later Latin proponents of the idea to understand that there is no material difference whatever between sin as viewed in the one or the other way, but only a formal difference in the point of view as such. The wording of the proposition condemned by Pope Alexander VIII on August 21, 1690 (that 'philosophical sin in one who ... does not actually think of God, is ... not an offense to God ...'), makes this clear (see the otherwise quite obtuse discussion of 'Philosophical sin' in O'Neil 1912: 7).

34. See Deely 1992.
35. See Deely 1987a, 1987b, 1992 [1991], 1994a, and forthcoming.
36. Notably pioneered by the 1964 work of A.-M. Dubarle.
37. 'Slaves, obey your masters': 61–63a: Eph. 6.5–9; 61–63b: Col. 3.22–25. Cf. also I Cor. (c. 57 A.D.), 7.20f., which has been translated with opposite senses on the question of whether a slave should accept an opportunity of freedom. Beginning with the admonition: 'Let everyone stay as he was at the time of his call' (i.e., conversion to Christianity), the translation of the Jerusalem Bible goes on to say: 'If, when you were called, you were a slave, do not let this bother you; but *if you should have the chance of being free, accept it*'; while the Revised Version of the King James Translation (cited in Durant 1944: 590) says: 'If you were a slave when you were called, never mind. *Even if you can gain your freedom, make the most of your present condition instead*' (italics added here to both versions).

At this point my curiosity was piqued. I thought perhaps there was a Protestant-Catholic (in the modern sense) ideological conflict in evidence here. I consulted *La Sagrada Biblia*, traducida de los textos originales por el equipo hispanoamericano de la Casa de la Biblia de Madrid, given its 'imprimatur' 14 October 1969. The passage in question, 1 Cor. 20–21, read as follows (p. 899): 'Cada cual permanezca en el estado en el que estaba al ser llamado. Has sido llamado siendo esclavo? No te preocupes. Incluso si puedes hacerte libre, aprovecha más bien tu condicion de esclavo'. So much for the first hypothesis.

Moreover, *La Biblia*, also a Catholic Bible, imprimatured 26 January 1989, trad. para las comunidades cristianas de Latinoamérica na y para los que buscan a Dios, texto íntegro traducido del hebreo y del griego (12th ed.; Navarre: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1972), p. 385, reads as follows: 'Que cada uno, pues, quede en la situación en que estaba cuando Dios lo llamó. Si eres esclavo, no te preocupes por eso; pero si puedes conseguir la libertad, no dejes pasar la oportunidad'.

I decided to look to an older authority, the *Biblia Sacra juxta Vulgatam Clementinam, nova editio logicis partitionibus aliisque subsidiis ornata a R. P. Alberto Colunga, O.P. et Dr. Laurentino Turrado* (3rd ed.; Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1959): 'Unusquisque in qua vocatione vocatus est, in ea permaneat. Servus vocatus es? non sit tibi curae: sed si potes fieri liber magis utere'. This Latin reading I confirmed in the *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine*, utrumque textum cum apparatu critico imprimendum curavit Eberhard Nestle novis curis elaboraverunt Erwin Nestle et Kurt Aland (22nd ed.; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1906). The Greek text of the problem passage in this source, which I also confirmed against *The Greek New Testament*, ed. K. Aland, M. Black, C. M. Martini, B. M. Metzger, and A. Wikgren (3rd ed.; Münster/Westphalia: Institute for New Testament Textual Research — United Bible Societies, 1975), 1 Cor. 20–21, reads: '[20] ἕκαστος ἐν τῇ κλήσει ᾗ ἐκλήθη ἐν ταύτῃ μενέτω [21] δοῦλος ἐκλήθης; μή σοι μελέτω· ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ δύνασι ἐλεύθερ ος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσται'.

Both the Latin and, on consultation, the Greek appeared to me to support more the *Jerusalem Bible* translation. But, just to confirm my own impression, I thought I would consult one more authority, the *Commentary* of Thomas Aquinas on the *Epistola ad Corinthios Prima.* He comments on verse 21: '*Sed potius si potes fieri liber*, maneas in servituti, quia causa est humilitas', for which reading he cites Ambrose, Gregory, and Boethius. Apparently, I thought, there are interpretants at work in both the Greek and the Latin that make it difficult for the best of minds to decide once and for all if the text says 'yes' or 'no'.

However, at the risk of turning this into a footnote from an Eco novel, I need to mention that, in looking up the date of Aquinas's commentary (Weisheipl 1974: 372–373), I discovered that the supposed remarks of Aquinas on the point under discussion were not authored by Aquinas at all but were interpolated into an incomplete manuscript courtesy of two thirteenth-century gentlemen, Peter of Tarantaise and Nicholas Goran. How Aquinas himself read the text, therefore, is unknown, which fits well with the rest of the story.

38. Far from opposing slavery in general, the Church Council of Pavia in 1018 decreed a status of perpetual slavery for all children begotten by priests, as a way of emphasizing that priests of the Latin regime are supposed to be celibate.
39. This was the whole point of the Latin distinction of perception from sensation within experience: see 'From sensation to intellection: The Scope of the *Doctrina Signorum*', in Deely 1994b: 73–88; Poinsot 1985 [1632]: Book I, Q. 6, and Book III, Qq. 1 and 2.
40. Gula 1989: 120:

> Since social structures are the result of acts of personal freedom in the first place, the relationship of personal sin to social sin is inevitable and inseparable. ... But being responsible for causing social sin does not mean we are morally culpable for it. Culpability demands knowledge and freedom. So, once we become aware of the social structures which influence our lives for the worse, then we need to be attentive to the further decisions we make and to the actions we take to support such structures which are destructive and oppressive of human well-being. However, as often happens, we get so caught up in the worldview and spirit we have created by these structures that we cannot see clearly the evil we perpetuate. As a result, our moral sensitivity to evil grows dull. Our blindness and ignorance consequently limit our culpability for social sin. But if, after our consciousness has been raised and our imaginations transformed so that we can see clearly the wrongdoing being perpetuated by our social practices, we still do nothing about the oppressive structures, then we are on the verge of culpable personal sin for these social ills. Our liability, or obligation to make reparation for them, becomes proportionate to our degree of culpability. (see further Himes 1986)

However, lest such ideas be misinterpreted as supportive of mindless social activism such as pervaded religious individuals in the wake of Vatican Council II, as if any individual has the ability to alter any social structure whatever, it needs to be understood that relative position in a given social organization is every bit as important as heightened moral consciousness in the dialectic mediation between original sin and personal responsibility, whether individual or social. 'The right use of power lies behind the reality of social sin and remains a major moral issue .... If we wish to do anything effective about social sin we certainly need to know something about how societies work. To make business and politics less sinful demands learning lessons of economic and political science', and, we should add, lessons of history, philosophy, and human science generally. Hence the justice of Wittgenstein's contention that the only way to improve the world is by making ourselves better as persons. But hence too the importance, along with this betterment, of profound study in history, philosophy, and eco-

nomic and social sciences as well as natural sciences for those who would take upon themselves the task of reshaping society and setting for the human group long-term goals with a consequent assignation of intermediate stages. Among these stages those which most promote the socialization of intelligence will generally prove the richer means of overall human advance.

41. Detailed discussion of this expression in Arbesmann 1958.

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[*Note*: Chronology based on Weisheipl 1974: q.v.]

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i. 1259–1265, 1272–1273. *Expositio et Lectura super Epistolas Pauli Apostoli*. [Aquinas wrote on St. Paul at least in these periods, but Ch. 7, verse 10 through Chapter 10 were interpolated into his mss., as remarked in Note 37. I consulted the text erroneously presented as that of Aquinas in the *Doctoris Angelici Divi Thomae Aquinatis Sacri Ordinis F.F. Praedicatorum*, ed. Stanislaus Eduard Fretlé (Paris: Vivès, 1889), in 34 vols. The text of the commentary 'Epistola ad Corinthios Prima' occurs in Vol. 20, pp. 603–752, with the interpolated text treating of Ch. 7, verses 20 and 21 occurring in Lect. 4, p. 676a–b.]

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Notable in this Gibson translation is a ludicrous lacuna, namely, the result of the decision not to translate Book VI. On p. 248 of the Schaff and Wace volume, where the translation of Book VI should begin, one encounters instead a Victorian curiosity: 'We have thought best to omit altogether the translation of this book'. This bizarre spectacle is repeated in this same work when it comes to the Second and Twenty-Second of Cassian's Conferences (entry following, pp. 422 and 519, respectively) which also treat of sexual matter. Fortunately this triple lacuna has since been filled in the trans. by Terrence G. Kardong, *Cassian on Chastity* (Richardton, ND: Assumption Abbey Press, 1993). I am grateful to Mr. James Brokman for calling Kardong's work to my attention.]

i. 426–429. [*The Conferences of John Cassian*, trans. Edgar C. S. Gibson in Schaff and Wace 1894, q.v.: 169–179 (contents), 291–545 (text). Conferences 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 18 can also be found in the trans. of Colm Luibheid, *John Cassian. Conferences* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985). See note on the preceding entry.]

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John Deely (b. 1942) is Professor at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. He has previously published *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinsot* (1985), *Basics of Semiotics* (1990), *The Human Use of Signs* (1994), and *New Beginnings: Early Modern Philosophy and Postmodern Thought* (1994).