

Angeletics: Philosophical and Christian Ethical Implications

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Abstract: The christian ethics of Thomas Aquinas meets the present need for an intercultural new media ethics as *angeletics* developed by one of the most famous current theorist Rafael Capurro dealing with problematic field of media ethics that transcends the legal realm by linking the ideas of justice and virtue in an ingenious way. Thomas's virtue theory coordinates private and public activities through a set of context-invariant, justice-oriented norms with conceptual appeal to contemporary questions of intercultural new media ethics. In our article, we first sketch how Aquinas's theory can be also of relevance to a non-confessional (virtual) audience through its appeal to the 'natural light of reason.' Then we explain how his theory of 'natural law' aligns his ideas of virtue and justice. From this vantage point, we address the tension between cultural diversity and moral uniformity in the sphere of new media ethics in general and in today's globalized *angeletics* in particular. Throughout the article, we aim to show how thomistic ethics gains inter-personal and intercultural validity that establishes social justice as the global virtue of *angeletics*.

Keywords: thomistic ethics, intercultural new media ethics, new media, angeletics.

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Introduction

The breakthrough and development of digital-electronic communication technology in recent decades is related to the changes of so-called human *lifeworld* (Lebenswelt). These changes for some time are the area of multidisciplinary research of media theorists. The Oxford philosopher Luciano Floridi has coined the term "infosphere"¹ to capture this point (Floridi, 1999). The Uruguay and Germany media philosopher Rafael Capurro - one of the most famous current theorist-has presented the theoretical model of *intercultural information ethics (angeletics)*² as a constructive proposal on purpose to regulate and to control interactions in cyberspace ethically.

¹ Floridi, Luciano (1999). Information Ethics: On the Philosophical Foundation of Computer Ethics. In: Ethics and Information Technology, 1(1), 37-56. See: <http://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/floridi/papers.htm>

² Capurro, Rafael (2011). Messages and Messengers. *Angeletics* as an Approach to the Phenomenology of Communication. Von Boten und Botschaften. Die Angeletik als Weg zur Phänomenologie der Kommunikation. In: ICIE, Vol. 5, München: Fink.

Rafael Capurro calls *angeletics* the study of messengers and messages. This word is derived from Greek *angelos* / *angelia*, meaning messenger / messages. We use these terms when we refer to angels or divine messengers. There is a long tradition in theology and religious studies called *angelology*. Angeletics is different from angelology. Its purpose is to study the phenomenon of messages and messengers within the boundaries of the *condition humaine*, having as its primary object human communication but including technical and natural processes as well.

Intercultural information ethics (*angeletics*) addresses questions concerning these intersections such as: how far is the Internet changing local cultural values and traditional ways of life? How far do these changes affect the life and culture of future societies in a global and local sense? Put another way, how far do traditional cultures and their moral values communicate and transform themselves under the impact of the digital “infosphere” in general and of the Internet in particular? In other words, *angeletics* can be conceived as a field of research where moral questions of the “infosphere” are reflected in a comparative manner on the basis of different cultural traditions.

For the philosophers of the Enlightenment, for instance for Immanuel Kant, the censorship-free distribution of scientific knowledge through the press belongs to the core of a free society. According to Jürgen Habermas, Kant could not foresee the transformation of the public space in the 20th century becoming dominated by mass media (Capurro, 1996)³. The Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo has criticized the Habermasian ideal of a transparent society arguing in favor of an opaque or “weak” communication structure as is the case of the Internet (Vattimo, 1989)⁴. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk has pointed out that we live in a “time of empty angels” or “mediatic nihilism”, in which we forget what message is to be sent while the messengers of transmission media multiply: “This is the very *disangelium* of current times” (Sloterdijk, 1997)⁵. The word *disangelium* (bad news) builds a contrast to *euangelium*, addressing the empty nature of the messages disseminated by the mass media, culminating in McLuhans dictum: “The medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1967)⁶. The question today is then to what extent the Internet creates a new *angeletic* space giving rise to new synergies of messages and messengers beyond the hierarchical structure of mass media. If according to Sloterdijk (Sloterdijk, 1983)⁷ mass media have a cynical structure, the question arises now about the “fantasmatic” character of the new media (Zizek, 1997)⁸.

We would like to address the relationship between *angeletics* and thomistic ethics because in a globalized world (via new media) intercultural new media ethics (*angeletics*) must cope with both the multicultural diversity of moral practices and a multiplicity of ethical theories that orient them, without surrendering to relativism. Our article explains how Thomas Aquinas artfully combines sensitivity to cultural differences with an ethics characterized by notional unity, conceptual clarity, and categorical acuity. In Thomas, justice functions as a

³ Capurro, Rafael (1996). Informationsethik nach Kant und Habermas. In: *Philosophie in Österreich*. Österreich: Viena, S. 307-310.

⁴ Vattimo, Gianni (1989). *La società trasparente*. Garzanti: Milano.

⁵ Sloterdijk, Peter (1997). „Kantilenen der Zeit“. In: *Lettre International*, 36, S. 71-77. Frankfurt a. M.

⁶ McLuhan, Marshall (1967). *The Medium Is the Message*, Penguin Books: United Kingdom.

⁷ Sloterdijk, Peter (1983). *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt a.M.

⁸ Zizek, Slavoj (1997). *Die Pest der Phantasmen. Die Effizienz des Phantasmatischen in den neuen Medien*. Passagen: Wien.

global virtue that connects the economic sphere with the common good of humanity. As a relational virtue, justice expresses a communal orientation of the human being by intimately connecting the actions of individuals and society. Whereas many moral theorists have emphasized the *communal* benefit of virtuous and just actions, Thomas's theory also indicates how acting in accordance with moral principles promotes *personal* fulfillment.

I. The Concept of *Angeletics* by Rafael Capurro

The key question of intercultural information ethics according to Rafael Capurro is thus how far and in which ways are we going to be able to enlarge both freedom and justice within a perspective of sustainable cultural development that protects and encourages cultural diversity as well as the interaction between them. Digital information technology has at first sight changed the horizon of human thinking and action in such a way that we have to deal with many problems for which classic ethical theories do not have only any answers but they cannot even provide a sufficient basis to deal with them. Rafael Capurro emphasizes that: „It is indeed necessary to undertake an intercultural dialogue on information technology which means not only to become aware of the conditions under which different life styles and life projects can coexist within the new digital environment but also in order to explore how it affects and is being appropriated by different cultures particularly as they are conditioned by this new environment“ (Capurro, 2007).⁹

The impact of information technology on a global scale and on all aspects of human life gives, according to Rafael Capurro, on the one hand, a plausible argument in favour of the uniqueness approach not only with regard to the subject matter but also to the theoretical approaches so far. But this does not mean that, on the other hand, the moral code itself and its ethical reflection will be superseded by another one. The basic question concerning the status of moral persons, their respect or disrespect, remains unchanged although we may discuss as to what are the candidates and what this respect means in a specific situation. As Capurro says: „We may also discuss as to how this code has been interpreted (or not) within different ethical and cultural traditions and how it is being conceived with regard to the challenge of information technology“ (Capurro, 2007).¹⁰

This is a humanistic approach to the information society that treats cyber-space and the techno-sphere as a global domain where questions of identity, otherness, and recognition resonate with the same force that they do in the “real” social and political world. In other words, the digital environment is a seismograph that records the identity-related conflicts and tensions between the local and the global that animate the non-digital world. Intercultural information ethics therefore seeks to examine the conditions for humane and ethical cross-cultural exchange in the virtual world. It attempts to locate the ethical frameworks necessary to establish the virtual universe as a space of decency, respect, and dialogue. Questions concerning anonymity, universal accessibility to knowledge, and digital surveillance, are basic to all societies. According to Capurro, from an intercultural perspective the leading question is how human cultures can locally flourish within a global digital environment. As Capurro says: “This question concerns in the first place community building on the basis of

⁹ Capurro Rafael, “Intercultural Information Ethics”, 2007. This paper is a contribution to the international ICIE Symposium "Localizing the Internet. Ethical Issues in Intercultural Perspective" that took place in Karlsruhe(Germany) in 2004. Published in: Rafael Capurro, Johannes Frühbauer, Thomas Hausmanninger (eds.): Localizing the Internet. Ethical Aspects in Intercultural Perspective. ICIE Series Vol. 4, Munich: Fink 2007, pp. 21-38.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

cultural diversity“(Capurro, 2007).¹¹ But how to do it? How is it possible on the ground of this cultural diversity to build something strong and steady as the intercultural information ethics?

Capurro has developed a new theoretical framework called “angeletics.” As the concept of “information” is quite ambiguous, he has turned his eyes to the concept of “message” in order to concentrate on the aspect of “transmission of meaning” and has tried to describe the structures and developments of various message phenomena in history. He named this particular study concerning message phenomena “angeletics” (in English) or “Angeletik” (in German), derived from the Greek word *angelia* which means message. “something transmitted,” but does not address “transmitting.” *Angeletics* is considered to be a comprehensive framework in which the mechanisms of generation, formation, sharing, or transmitting of these pre-understandings or horizons of meanings are discussed. Tadashi Takenouchi states that to describe generation or transmission of messages in history, it is necessary to see how the horizons of meanings or pre-understandings have been formed from a historical viewpoint (Takenouchi, 2003)¹².

Capurro says that message transmission has two types of structure referred to as “dialogical” and “discursive” in the communicology of Vilem Flusser. The former is a structure where new messages are produced, and the latter is one that becomes clear when (new) messages are spread¹³. Capurro regards the former structure as “horizontal = interactive” and the latter as “vertical = one way.” The expression of “vertical” implies the image that messages are transmitted from top to bottom with authority or power. Capurro points out the dialectic relationship woven by these horizontal and vertical structures in (western) history. He takes up three eras as model cases:

The first case is ancient Greece. In the pre-Socrates era, the vertical structure of message transmission, by which gods make their intents known to humans, was dominant. The messengers who delivered the gods’ messages to humans were poets or oracles. Such structure of messages was determined by religious and political authorities and constituted the core of society. In addition to this vertical structure of messages, a horizontal one was developed through the dialogical culture of sophists and the philosophies of Socrates and Plato. As such, the vertical structure of messages took the place of the horizontal one. But this does not mean that the vertical one disappeared completely.

The second case is the Age of Enlightenment. In the Age of Enlightenment, the dialectical relationship between vertical and horizontal structures appears again, being different from that of ancient Greece. Capurro thinks that the vertical structure of messages in this era was based on orders or norms characterized by churches and civil society. Those were given conditions. On the other hand, he thinks that communications among researchers through publications allowed the horizontal message structure to gain power.

¹¹ Capurro Rafael (2007). “Intercultural Information Ethics”. This paper is a contribution to the international ICIE Symposium “Localizing the Internet. Ethical Issues in Intercultural Perspective” that took place in Karlsruhe (Germany) in 2004. Published in: Rafael Capurro, Johannes Frühbauer, Thomas Hausmanninger (eds.): *Localizing the Internet. Ethical Aspects in Intercultural Perspective*. ICIE Series Vol. 4, Munich: Fink 2007, pp. 21-38.

¹² Takenouchi Tadashi (2003). Capurro’s Hermeneutic Approach to Information Ethics: Ethos in the Information Society and the Development of “angeletics”. In: Shiso (Thought), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 7, No. 951, pp. 69-88.

¹³ Vilem Flusser (1983). *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie*. European Photography, p.58.

The third case is in the age of electronic new media, that is, the modern times. The Internet is regarded as a new infrastructure which enables us to communicate horizontally. The Internet provides all kinds of message transmission: One to one, one to many, many to one and many to many. This is a rather unique situation in history; therefore it is worth analyzing from the viewpoint of the “message society.” This horizontal message structure in the Internet Age is one of the main targets of *angeletics*. Even if the Internet weakens the dominance of the vertical structure of mass media to some extent, it will continue to have crucial influence on our daily lives. This struggle for power is also the theme of *angeletics* (Capurro, 2007).

Tadashi Takenouchi emphasizes that this is one of the most important differences between *angeletics* and mediology: The former considers message phenomena not only on the level of material or “outer” factors, but also of subjective or “inner” factors. In other words, it is one of the main tasks of *angeletics* to investigate how horizons of meanings (“ethos” or shared pre-understandings) themselves are formed and how such subjective factors give meaning to material factors in message or meaning transmission¹⁴. To put it more directly, mediological studies can be seen as a part of *angeletics* in a sense because all kinds of messages, senders, mediators, and receivers are in the scope of *angeletics* while only “media” are regarded as producers of transmission in mediology. Therefore *angeletics* is an idea that comprehends mediological viewpoints. Mediology concentrates on “outer” factors such as social organization or material media rather than the generation of meaning or ideology. *Angeletics* emphasizes “inner” factors such as pre-understandings or horizons of meanings, which investigates various aspects of “ethos” by considering the roles or relationships of senders, mediators, and receivers. Capurro tries to theorize *angeletics* based on Heidegger’s “pre-structure of understanding.” This means that message is considered to have ontological character and therefore a relationship with the world of human existence.

What does Capurro think *angeletics* in the information age should be? He discusses this question by referring to Foucault’s idea of “technologies of the self.” Foucault distinguishes among four types of technologies: of producing, of symbolization, of governing and of the self (Foucault, 1984)¹⁵. Whereas the former three are related to “act-oriented” ethics or “norms,” only the last one is related to “self-oriented” ethics or “forms” of our lives in which we exactly face our own “selves. These are apparently “act-oriented” ethics, and Capurro thinks that they do not make up a sufficient condition for us to live well in the information age. Since information and information technology is directly related to the formation of our lives, it is quite important for us to reflect upon self-oriented ethics, to think from “inside” ourselves with regard to matters of information ethics, rather than establish norms from “outside.” In this case, however, the “self” does not mean “ego.” Construction of living with others like this is what Capurro calls “self-formation (Selbstformung),” and ethics on that level is undoubtedly self-oriented¹⁶. The concept of “technologies of the self” as interpreted by Capurro is a slightly different from that of Foucault. While Foucault treats the formation of ethical selves as self-oppression toward specific models in history, Capurro emphasizes positive self-projection (Selbstformung) to create relationships with others, especially those from whom we are alienated or those whom we can recognize only through information media. “We are exposed to the place where we can form—and sometimes destroy – our lives

¹⁴ Takenouchi Tadashi (2003). Capurro’s Hermeneutic Approach to Information Ethics: Ethos in the Information Society and the Development of “*angeletics*”. In: Shiso (Thought), Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 7, No. 951, pp. 69-88.

¹⁵ Foucault, Michel (1984). *L’usage des plaisirs*. 2 Vol. Paris: Gallimard.

¹⁶ Capurro, Rafael (1995). *Leben im Informationszeitalter*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

not only with others but also for oth-ers” (Capurro, 1995)¹⁷. Capurro doesn’t think that “ethical problems can be solved by codes or prescriptions, at least when they are not understood as beginnings of the discussion. Reflections on ethics themselves can and should produce a new “ethos” in the mid and long term” (Capurro, 2000)¹⁸.

The model of *angeletics* by Rafael Capurro provides a conceptual framework for ethical intercultural dialogue, in order to ensure the prosperity of humanity in the XXI century digital environment. The key concern of *angeletics* is not only to overcome the isolation of the moral traditions in informational (digitized) society but also provide a platform for pragmatic actions that can be used as a guideline in order to preserve and enhance cultural diversity in the new digital environment. Capurro has doubts about attempts to develop “universal” information ethics codes by the United Nations or such organizations. Although the Internet has brought us universal access that overreaches borders, every country has relatively different cultural bases, so a single code or set of norms concerning information ethics will not be accepted by all of them. The model of *angeletics* opens up ethical research field where moral questions about *infosphere* can be reflected a comparative way, based on different cultural traditions. Therefore in this context it is becoming more and more importance should focus on moral codes. Christian morality can provide to the intercultural information ethics the necessary foundation of values regulating the actions in virtuality.

II. Thomistic ethics in the context of new media

Ethics is a practical science, concerned with human actions in so far as they are related to each other and ordered to the end. Aristotle stressed the practical nature of ethics: it does not tell us so much what virtue is, as much as it aims at making us good persons¹⁹. St. Thomas, on the other hand, emphasizes the cognitive nature of ethics more than Aristotle. In order to lead our life as we ought, knowledge of the end is necessary, however, this knowledge should be the basis for right acts. Ethics considers man’s actions as directed to his ultimate end. The ethics of Aquinas is dominated by the fact that all beings strive for the good. All our choices and actions must be directed to what is really good for us. Metaphysics shows that the good, the object of our appetite, is being. It is our task to realize ourselves by uniting ourselves with the good. Ethics does not aim at perfecting us as individuals, so that we might stand in solitude amid a neutral environment. The end of man is to be united with the good, that is with reality as it is in itself²⁰. This means that ethics instructs us to direct our appetite to those things which really perfect us²¹. Being perfects us, and God does so in a superlative way, since he is the cause of all good things.

In a luminous text, Thomas writes that we experience as good those things to which we have a natural inclination²². Our reason establishes that such objects are good. Now that which falls under the order of reason, also falls under the order established by God himself²³.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Capurro, Rafael (2000). „Ethical Challenges of the Information Society in the 21st Century“. In: *International Information & Library Review* (2000), 32, 257-276. EEI21 - MEMPHIS. An Annual Scholarly Symposium.

¹⁹ *Ethic. Nich.* 1103b3.

²⁰ *Q. d. de veritate*, q. 1, a. 2; q. 8, a. 4, ad 5.

²¹ *S. c. G.* III, c. 109: “Quaelibet voluntas naturaliter vult illud quod est proprium volentis bonum, scilicet ipsum esse perfectum.” Cf. M. C. DONADIO MAGGI DE GANDOLFI, *Amor y bien. Los problemas del amor en Santo Tomás de Aquino*, Buenos Aires 1999, p. 105-147.

²² *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

²³ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 72, a. 4.

Reason is the measure of what is moral²⁴. However, reason, insofar as it determines the morality of our acts, must not be seen as a self-sufficient and arrogant power; it remains dependent on the order of nature. The entire treatise of the moral virtues in the *Secunda Secundae* is dominated by two theses: First, that we ourselves must determine what, in the different fields of human activity, is according to right reason, and second, that actually practicing the virtues must also be accompanied by reason, since reason must determine the mean of the virtues. In doing so it has a certain margin²⁵. All acts of the intellect and the will in us are derived from that which is according to our nature²⁶, since any reasoning depends on the principles which are known to us by nature, while tending to good things depends on the natural inclination to the last end. The natural law consists in the first principles of the practical intellect, which the intellect apprehends immediately because of our fundamental inclinations. For Aquinas a human act is morally good when conform to man's nature and ultimate end. Aquinas was the first to defend a new view: "The divine law based on God's grace does not do away with the human law as formulated by our reason"²⁷. This declaration of principle is of far reaching importance: in our world we cannot allow the violation of human rights as acknowledged by reason, under the pretext of what is claimed to be a revelation.

In our modern culture, in which people resort all the time to technological applications, a utilitarian approach is almost a matter of course. But technological applications are no more than means to an end, and man himself is the master who decides when and how to use them. In the ethics of Aquinas the virtues have a central place. Virtues are durable habits in our faculties which incline us to act in conformity with right reason and our ultimate end. The virtues give uniformity and coherence to our actions, facilitate prompt action and give us a certain satisfaction. St. Thomas stresses the connection between the virtues and the so-called positive precepts of moral law²⁸. Whereas many moral theorists have emphasized the *communal* benefit of virtuous and just actions, Thomas's theory also indicates how acting in accordance with moral principles promotes *personal* fulfillment.

In his Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, § 84-87, Pope John Paul II mentions a feature of modern man, namely his desire of total freedom. But, as the text says, this freedom which is so ardently desired, is a freedom which has lost its connection with truth, that is, with the natural structure of things and man's own being. Many theorists, for example Leo J. Elders, emphasize that one of the objections nowadays advanced by some people against traditional moral theology is that it tends to make Christians *heteronomous*, that is, governed by commandments and rules imposed on them from the outside²⁹. Therefore objective durable bonds at the interpersonal level are avoided, in order to safeguard one's own freedom. The plurality of opinions and the respect due to all of them makes people uncertain as to what is true. It is very difficult, if not impossible, in our pluralistic societies to reach a consensus on questions about moral life. This revolution in moral thinking is also an effect of the technological revolution. The ethics of Aquinas has as its foundation human nature, and has been built with irrefutable arguments into a coherent whole. It purports to make us live according to what is best in us. Precisely because of its superior reasonableness, which takes the entire human person into account as a human individual and a member of society, it will

²⁴ *S. c. G.* III, c. 3.

²⁵ *Q. d. de virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 13, ad 18.

²⁶ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 91, a. 2.

²⁷ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 10, a. 10.

²⁸ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 32, a. 2.

²⁹ Elders J. Leo. *Anuario Filosófico*, XXXIX/2 (2006), 439-463.

be a decisive factor in guiding the moral life of people in the future. Thomas's ethics can be of relevance also to a non-Christian audience through its appeal to the 'natural light of reason.'

III. The Relation between Thomistic Ethics and *Angeletics*

Thomas constructs a hierarchy of duties within the natural law which specifies further the generic principle to pursue the good and to shun evil, and provides certain precepts (such as the maxim to prevent avoidable harm). Norms that can directly be concluded from said principles are likewise seen as valid across time and culture. No individuals, businesses, or governments are exempt from these strictures. This explication of the *natural law* in and of itself curtails the claims to validity from advocates of cultural specificity. For Thomas the fundamental imperative to advance the natural goods of human life helps in generating a substantial context-invariant body of moral norms, binding all humans, at all times and in all places, to life-conducive policies. The natural law provides a global ethical yardstick, according to which regional customs can be measured, both in the public and in the private sector (Williams 1993)³⁰. Human virtue, he argues, not only renders the act good, but also improves the agent of the good deed. In fact, a natural *inclination* to act reasonably and virtuously is for Thomas common to all human beings (*S. th.* I-II 91, 2), regardless of political, religious or geographical differences³¹. Virtuous behavior unlocks otherwise dormant potentialities and helps individuals to make the most of themselves. For the formulation of *angeletics* in the age of globalization, this structure, too, is of eminent importance, since it designates an *unconditional* respect for all human beings. Their essential status as subjects of dignity is not *conditioned* on worldly achievements; humans do not have to *earn* their right to a dignified treatment. Neither institutions nor society can legitimately reduce a human being to its economic function either on behalf of collective interests, or in response to individual misdemeanor. Human subjects should never be objectified into mere 'human resources' or sheer 'human capital'—that is the immensely practical and immensely important outcome of this philosophical-theological argument.

Jacobsen and Bruun state that a crosscultural insistence on the basic tenets of natural law cannot be dismissed as an illegitimate infringement on cultural sovereignty rights (Jacobsen and Bruun 2000)³². In Thomas, a normative orientation is ascribed to the human being as such. Claus Dierksmeier and Anthony Celano state that as Thomas's connection between law and justice, and especially the establishment of the precepts of justice as a duty to everyone, can be understood as the beginnings of a concept of universal human rights (Dierksmeier, Celano, 2012)³³.

Thomas proceeds to the idea of a social justice that *binds* as well as *bonds* individuals and societies. Therefore Thomistic ethics resonates strongly in the recent *angeletics* by Rafael Capurro. The key question of new media ethics (*angeletics*) according to Rafael Capurro is thus how far and in which ways are we going to be able to enlarge both freedom and justice within a perspective of sustainable cultural development that protects and encourages cultural diversity as well as the interaction between them. Intercultural information ethics therefore

³⁰ Williams, O. F. (1993). "Catholic Social Teaching: A Communitarian Democratic Capitalism for the New World Order," *Journal of Business Ethics* 12(12): 919–32.

³¹ *S. th.* I-II, 94, 4; 95, 2.

³² Jacobsen, M., and O. Bruun. 2000. *Human Rights and Asian Values: Contesting National Identities and Cultural Representations in Asia*. London: Routledge Curzon.

³³ Dierksmeier C. and Celano A. (2012). „Thomas Aquinas on Justice as a Global Virtue in Business“. In: *Business Ethics Quarterly* 22:2, pp. 247–272.

seeks to examine the conditions for humane and ethical cross-cultural exchange in the virtual world. It attempts to locate the ethical frameworks necessary to establish the virtual universe as a space of decency, respect, and dialogue. Questions concerning anonymity, universal accessibility to knowledge, and digital surveillance, are basic to all societies. According to Capurro, from an intercultural perspective the leading question is how human cultures can locally flourish within a global digital environment. As Capurro says: "This question concerns in the first place community building on the basis of cultural diversity"³⁴ (Capurro, 2007). The model of intercultural information ethics by Rafael Capurro provides a conceptual framework for ethical intercultural dialogue, in order to ensure the prosperity of humanity in the XXI century digital environment. The key concern of intercultural information ethics is not only to overcome the isolation of the moral traditions in informational (digitized) society but also provide a platform for pragmatic actions that can be used as a guideline in order to preserve and enhance cultural diversity in the new digital environment. Rafael Capurro considered model of the intercultural information ethics provides theoretically a universal "minimal" morality dealing with the ethical issues based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, however too little attention is paid to specific problematic situations and to the practical empowerment of the morality. Therefore in this context it is becoming more and more importance should focus on moral codes. Thomistic ethics is very important valorem basis. Thomistic ethics can provide to the intercultural angeletics the necessary foundation of values regulating the actions in virtuality. Capurro emphasizes, angeletics as the space of interplay should not be confounded with simple paradigms of multiculturalism and relativism or reduced to an abstract discourse of human rights. On the contrary, it is a space for reflection and a series of practices about ourselves (and ourselves) in a common world. The interplay is what gives values their 'foundation' and simultaneously avoids the lapse into fundamentalism, superficial good-feeling or ideological dogmatism (Capurro, 2010).

Here it is very important to focus on encyclical letter "Laudato si'" of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home. The pope Francis emphasizes that: "when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously"(2015). The rapid dissemination of information in the digital era may demand development of new ethical guidelines. The Internet places participants and sources simultaneously in the role of consumer/user and information provider. The dynamic relationship of these coexisting roles creates social interactions and ethical encounters (Singer, 2010). The challenge for intercultural (global) media ethics is to see beyond its heritage in the 'ethical monism' that characterises the Western philosophical tradition within which modernity is portrayed as of more or less one root and stock. The scope must embrace universal human values common to both Western and non-Western perspectives (Rao and Wasserman, 2007). But if normativity is difficult enough to identify at a local level, this challenge is vastly magnified at a global level. The danger of yielding to a form of moral relativism remains a dilemma.

The proposal of the Pope finding a way out of alienation is the idea of common good: „In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common

³⁴ Capurro Rafael, "Intercultural Informaton Ethics", 2007. This paper is a contribution to the international ICIE Symposium "Localizing the Internet. Ethical Issues in Intercultural Perspective" that took place in Karlsruhe(Germany) in 2004. Published in: Rafael Capurro, Johannes Frühbauer, Thomas Hausmanninger (eds.): Localizing the Internet. Ethical Aspects in Intercultural Perspective. ICIE Series Vol. 4,Munich: Fink 2007, pp. 21-38.

good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters"³⁵ (2015). Drawing principally from Judaeo-Christian ethics, common goods are taken as those principles that are essential for maintaining human society and necessary for ethical reasoning, and find expression in a wide (even universal) range of religions and professional practices. The common goods of human dignity, unconditional acceptance of the Other, and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable, make the *relational* imperatives of dialogic communication understood as intersubjective universalism as our duty to preserve life as timeless and non-negotiable.

The intercultural new media ethics (*angeletics*), usually considered in terms of a conception of normativity, faces the difficulty of having to keep pace with the increasing spatiality of audiences, together with the decreasing temporality of information flow. That the term 'media ethics' almost wholly connotes breaches to codes of ethics is unfortunate, particularly since responsibility implies a teleological intention of the actor's to promote certain consequential moral goods. It is a normative quest rather than one motivated by deontological consideration. That is, it intends to do good *for persons* rather than merely to do *them* no harm. Therefore intercultural information ethics must (consequentially) connect *human* wellbeing as an external good to the internal goods or virtues of media consumer/creator practice if it were to have any teleological value. With the current capacities which news media have, to reach mass audiences across continents in real time poses enormous moral challenges.

According to Thomas Aquinas the human being, i.e., every human being, is naturally inclined towards moral conduct. If Thomas is right in his universal approach to human morality, indeed close attention to virtue as the inherent proclivity of human behavior has to be paid by any theory that aspires to be a truthful account of human affairs. Thomas Aquinas's virtue ethics is of a truly inter-cultural relevance, whose beneficial implication become especially visible in the age of globalization. Thomas argues that there is an inter-personal dimension to virtue ethics (MacIntyre, 1999)³⁶ which allows for its application across cultural divides, and that this dimension stems from a concern for the common good, properly qualified as an endeavor to extend the practices of social justice to everyone. In today's world, where a global new media operates without being adequately regulated by a global government, the cultivation of virtue in the new media sphere attains ever more significance in order to establish and safeguard a dignified life for each human person.

Conclusions

1) From a methodological perspective, the intercultural information ethics of the information society cannot be delimited to a purely formal approach to the new frontiers of the information society. In other words, an ethical approach to the information society is more than an affair of principles, normative frames, and recommendations.

2) Intercultural information ethics can be understood as the simultaneous affirmation of human rights, equity, and solidarity, as well as a field of inquiry and style of interrogation in and of itself. Information and communication are both "resources" whose ethical usage and distribution can create the conditions for democracy and greater well-being. Intercultural ethical reflection on the information society is necessarily reflection on the values of that

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ MacIntyre, A. C. (1999). *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Chicago: Open Court.

society, which understands itself as such and the translation of those values into a set of shared principles and/or normative guidelines.

3) Intercultural information ethics by Rafael Capurro asks how diversity and difference can be safeguarded in a technological landscape defined by homogenization, "leveling," and mass consumption. Intercultural information ethics therefore seeks to examine the conditions for humane and ethical cross-cultural exchange in the virtual world. It attempts to locate the ethical frameworks necessary to establish the virtual universe as a space of decency, respect, and dialogue. Intercultural information ethics provides theoretically a universal "minimal" morality dealing with the ethical issues based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, however too little attention is paid to specific problematic situations and to the practical empowerment of the morality. Therefore in this context it important to focus on moral codes.

4) Christian morality can provide to the intercultural information ethics the necessary foundation of values regulating the actions in virtuality. In this sense the model of Thomistic ethics can provide to media consumer/creator common standards of morality as an ethical behavior regulating common rules. The experimental application of the principles of Thomistic ethics to media offering a clear, rational model of the Christian values as an alternative for the chaos of the moral model's multiplicity on the Internet. Therefore Thomistic ethics can become valuable basis for intercultural information ethics applying of the members of a "networked" digital society on the Internet.

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