

MORAL VISION: SEEING THE WORLD WITH LOVE AND JUSTICE

David Matzko McCarthy and James M. Donohue, CR, *Moral Vision: Seeing the World with Love and Justice* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2018. \$30.00. pp. xii + 195. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7487-0).

In a small group teaching setting during my undergraduate years, Christine Robinson, from the English Language Department of the University of Edinburgh, recounted her experience teaching English in France. Her students could not stop laughing when she emphasised: ‘It’s SHIP, not SHEEP!’ They laughed because they could not hear the difference between the two words. She cited this example because if a language learner cannot hear the difference between two words, that student cannot pronounce the words. This example reflects how I understand the authors’ proposal of moral vision: ‘The responsibility of seeing what is going on—is in itself a moral task’ (p. 9). Integrating western philosophical traditions and biblical and theological themes, the authors ask what is good and attempt to present a moral theology based on vision, arguing that how we see the world shapes our choices and actions.

Moral Vision is an attempt to draw together the authors’ extensive teaching experience in Catholic ethics to create a textbook with undergraduates and seminarians in mind. The attempt to create an introductory text to make a case for their conviction of moral theology and their concept of ‘vision’ is an ambitious goal for a relatively short book. This book should be understood as a taster of their case that invites further exploration rather than as a comprehensive introduction to the diverse views on ethics. The authors assume that their readers have a certain level of knowledge of ethics, and assume that they agree with their stance on virtue ethics. If this book were to serve as an introduction to ethics, it would be more helpful if its authors could first introduce and dialogue with other ethicists with whom they do not agree, such as those who propose deontological ethics and utilitarian ethics, before proposing their approach to virtue ethics and explaining why their framework is stronger than the others.

In Part I (Chapters 1–7), the authors lay the foundation of what they mean by vision, and how vision affects action. Their use of supporting evidence is from the philosophical realm, such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill. In Part II (Chapters 8–14), the authors attempt to help their readers ‘re-envision’ their moral compass by resetting their vision through the lens of Christianity, and they draw more heavily from theological sources.

Each chapter is short and thematic, and is laid out in an accessible way with sections that are clearly and informatively labelled. The authors agree that seeing is more important than becoming and doing in non-abstract situations, and they engage with primary texts and encourage the application of theories to the reader’s daily life.

Although reflection and further study are helpful for class discussion, I wonder how well these case studies will translate to non-American cultures, and how well the examples will age. The authors do not specify whether this book was written for the American context, but examples such as those of Tony Stark and Fredrick Douglass are dated and only relevant to those from a certain age and place. As an ethnic minority academic from the majority world, and as one who occasionally teaches in the majority world, I wonder how well these case studies will work for my students. Nevertheless, all the examples are contextual, and it is up to the teacher to provide relevant examples for their students—textbooks are merely a teaching aid.

Our society is interested in the dualism of knowledge or choice, and desire or reason. *Moral Vision* is a good reminder not to separate being from doing. This book is helpful for me as an aspiring ethicist, and as a reader working to become a better person.

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