The Jesuits also make an appearance in Javier Patiño Loira's essay (132–56), which shows how the Society of Jesus embraced the teaching of Huarte de San Juan, whose *Examen de ingenios* was adapted by the Jesuit Antonio Possevino. In selecting candidates to welcome into their colleges, Jesuits, like Huarte, were content to assess the talents of candidates on the basis of external indicators, on physiognomy, and presumed propensities, as being a sound basis for pointing a potential recruit towards the tasks for which they were best suited. Unlike Huarte, however, they abjured the natural determinism that caused the censoring of the Spaniard's treatise, and—as can be seen from the three inaugural speeches for the Roman College's courses between 1596 and 1617 as analyzed by Patiño Loira—over time they increasingly concentrated on directing the talents of future members of the Society to specialized areas because they feared the aspiration to a knowledge without circumscribed limits, which had been so much a part of the humanist project, to which indeed Huarte was an heir. In the eyes of the young Jesuits' spiritual guides, “know thyself” meant accepting limits and the authority of the superiors; renouncing doubt and the unchecked thirst for knowledge in exchange for security of finding their right place in the Society and in an outside world beset with much greater uncertainty.

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Carlo Ginzburg with Lucio Biasiori, eds.

A Historical Approach to Casuistry: Norms and Exceptions in a Comparative Perspective. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Pp. xx + 353. Pb, £20.29.

In Florence during December 2014, an international conference was held entitled, “Norms and Exceptions. A Comparative Approach to Casuistry” that was coordinated by Carlo Ginzburg. The conference addressed the question “To what extent is a comparative approach to casuistry – in the broad sense of the term – possible?” To answer the question the papers focused on specific cases. These isolated cases would present what Ginzburg calls the “*mise en abîme*” (xvi), the setting in an abyss, wherein the case would not be generalized but treated in its own specificity. Ginzburg provides exactly that inasmuch as each of the fourteen cases are so unique that one cannot but feel one is in *Alice in Wonderland* curiously going down the rabbit hole in each instance. Having

always understood casuistry as itself a “descent into the particular,” as Thomas Aquinas would say, we invariably encounter more the validity of the exception than the norm, because, general norms apply only generally. And in that descent, we discover that the “exceptions include the norms, not the other way around” (xi).

The present volume is a collection of many of the contributions made in Florence. Ginzburg’s own interest in “microhistory” is clearly in evidence, where he can ask large questions in small places, like the case itself. More to the point, like the exception, Ginzburg prizes the anomaly. Sometimes called an “anomaly hunter,” Ginzburg’s predisposition for the abyss, for the micro, and the particular follows my own interest in sixteenth-century European casuistry and how it evolved from the nominalism of William of Ockham and later the Scotsman John Mair.

In reading Ginzburg’s volume, I found it at once so familiar though completely foreign. For instance, I cut my teeth on casuistry by reading Stephen Toulmin, Albert Jonsen, John Mahoney, John T. Noonan, Jr., Johann Sommerville, Edmund Leites, and Kevin Kelly and later Robert Maryks, Julia Fleming, and others. With the exception of the first two, my interlocutors in ethics, theology, and philosophy are effectively absent from this collection as are the casuists I studied from John Mair and Martin Le Maistre onwards, though on one page (290) in Ginzburg’s own article on Pascal, I found mention of Leonardus Lessius, Tomás Sánchez, and of course the object of Pascal’s ridicule, Antonio Escobar.

Ginzburg deliberately averts readers from the familiar discourses on casuistry, thereby highlighting the nearly universal resourcefulness of casuistry, while freeing us from the tendency to privilege particular periods and locations. By focusing on the anomalous, he argues that “defamiliarization and estrangement might help to reconsider some of the most widespread assumptions about the genre” (xv). Ginzburg becomes a fine pedagogue of the method he proposes when in his own essay he argues from the abyss of detail on Pascal’s own use of irony that he effectively undermined not only the Jesuits, but religion itself, giving birth and legitimacy, ironically to “a new, secularized version of casuistry” (293). With delight he concludes “a case study of the history of irony turned out to be a case study of the irony of history” (293).

Once one overlooks a number of infelicitous generalizations like Jesuit casuistry’s “radical laxist tendencies” (xvi), Ginzburg’s approach is instructive. The work that he does in this volume will support and encourage, rather than decenter those of us writing on casuistry. Contrary to his urge to unsettle, I think most in the field of casuistry share precisely his fascination with the case

because the case unlike the norm is about the act of weighing, it is a morality that “balances” (xiii). Like him we enjoy the tension.

The volume is divided into six parts, with most contributors, unless noted below, being Ginzburg’s colleagues in history. The first part naturally starts with foundations in the genre of medical casuistry and both essays are more conceptual than the subsequent dozen. The first one by a pediatric physician concludes bringing attention to the British case of Charlie Gard, while the second provides a comparative study of European and Chinese approaches to the case method. The second part turns to religious anomalies in the ancient and medieval world and the first essay, by a professor of religious studies, looks at ritual and its transgressions in ancient Greece. Inasmuch as more and more work in theological ethics turns to liturgy, this is a salutary piece for students investigating the field between ethics and worship, where norms for the latter can be considered “exceptionless,” though this essay challenges such assumptions. With even more provocation the second turns to the case of Jesus from *Toledot Yeshu*. In this well-written essay, we get to see evidence of the rich narrative tradition of casuistry.

The third and the fourth parts are the heart of the collection, the most attractive because they are the most case specific; I found them to be beautifully written and their cases to be wonderfully complex. The third part provides three essays on legal casuistry from Judaism and Islam dealing with cases regarding chess, adultery, and hashish. The fourth part highlights two English cases during the Reformation, one on suicide and the other on wife-beating. The fifth part are three essays on the early modern global world, with social locations in North America, Europe, and Portuguese Asia. The sixth is on Port Royal and the first essay on Port Royal’s own need to use casuistry is as ironic as the one that follows it by Ginzburg, noted above.

Besides the adventure, provocation, and irony, through each essay we find a wonderful appreciation of the epistemic richness of ethics when it dares to consider the particular as well as the exceptional. The book is a significant contribution to the field.

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