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*Volume I*

# **Normative Ethics and Objective Reason**

Edited by  
George F. McLean

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Acknowledgements

# Introduction

George F. McLean

The basic contention of these volumes is that morality, and hence ethics, is bi-polar: objective and subjective. Just as a magnet is defined by two poles which at the same time are distinct and complementary, in ethics the subjective and objective dimensions differ in their dynamic but are indispensable one or the other. One cannot exist without the other, for they are defined by their mutual relationship. In the search for clarity and consistency, the greatest intellectual temptation for the ethicist is to oversimplify, that is, to so emphasize either the objective or the subjective as radically to marginalize or even to eliminate the other. The real challenge is to recognize and integrate both.

Ethics would be much simpler if it could be reduced to either: a) matter-in-evaluation (or Spirit-in-dialectic) progressing inexorably to some such destiny as total empirical or pragmatic control, the classless society, or the ultimate Synthesis; or, b) the aloof individual facing anguished existential decisions with the sole concern of being "authentic".

However, ethics begins to engage reality--and, in turn, gains its own reality--only when it takes into account not either nature or freedom, but both. Only then can it engage the ambiguities and frustrations of life as human, which consist precisely in the relation between the two. As in a marriage, not only must the identity and relative autonomy of the two partners be respected and safeguarded, but their mutuality and inter-dependence must be insured and fostered. These volumes, are entitled *Ethics at the Crossroads* because they concern, not a monistic ethics, but the complex search to integrate both dimensions.

For some, that option threatens the security they have found in more simplistic models. Nevertheless, rational justification can be found for the objective-subjective vision of ethics. This Introduction to Volume I, *Normative Ethics and Objectivity*, will suggest some of the reasons for positing an objective dimension to ethics. Volume II, entitled: *Personalist Ethics and Human Subjectivity*, will explore the dimension of subjectivity. Volume III, entitled *Ethics and Culture* will search to bring together these two directions in a higher synthesis in terms of culture. The introduction of each volume will provide a brief overview and rationale of the structure of its chapters.

Most basically, the call for objectivity is based on the fact that human action must reflect the reality of the human condition. In other words, human reason must understand, and human freedom must accept, reality--including human reality--as it is. The facts of our environment, the nature of the human person, and their weight relative to human freedom may be debated, but not the need to take them into account. Inasmuch as the reality in question is, or has reference to what is human, it takes on a moral character. There are three basic dimensions to this.

1. *The human as being-in-the-world.* One basic reason why morality must have an objective dimension is that the human person is part of a cosmos or world which is given. As material, the human is subject to the basic forces and laws of nature; he or she exists within space and time. Though one may manipulate these, one cannot successfully disregard them. If anything, this view has been reinforced by the modern ecological movement which insists on obligations regarding the environment and the duty to respect the eco-system. Even the religiously inspired view which saw man as "master" of the world, now insists much more on man as "steward". Other ways of expressing the same basic idea are: the human person as "incarnate" (the *Geist im Welt* of Rahner),

or as contextualized (the human organism reacting to its environment). However this be expressed, the consequence is the same: reason must take account of one's situation in the world in order to discover a moral path. This intra-world reality of the human does not deny or exclude the spirituality of human kind or its transcendent destiny (see the appendix by G. Stanley in Volume II). The present volume insists that to be integrally human, the reality and impact of one's physical world must be taken into account.

2. *Human consciousness as objective.* Another way of reaching the same conclusion is through the relatively more "subjective" path of an analysis of human consciousness. The experience of human consciousness is initially and predominantly consciousness-of-objects, with an implicit consciousness-of-self. In other words, at least initially, our awareness is directed more outwardly than inwardly. It takes several years for truly reflexive knowledge (being aware of one's awareness: knowing that one knows) to mature. Our language manifests this when we say often "I know (or perceive) this or that", but only rarely "I know myself". It is characteristic of this consciousness-of-objects that one is aware of them as given. The objects of the consciousness include what we call cosmos or world. Gradually one grows aware of self-as-body with material characteristics, especially the fact of its being given. Finally, consciousness of one's emotions (feeling states) reveals that most often feelings are connected with transactions with the world: pleasure and pain often are derived from contact with objects which then become objects-of-desire and which are seen as good or bad inasmuch as they attract or repel. Our moral concepts of good or bad find their roots in these experiences.

3. *The human as necessarily social and cultural.* A critical dimension of the world in which the human finds him- or herself contextualized is that of other humans, i.e., society. One is brought into being by others--one's parents--whom one does not choose. Not only is one inexorably subjected to space and time, one has no say over whom one's parents are to be or the society into which one is brought. For years one literally is at the mercy of others, both for physical survival and growth and for one's cultural development. At least initially, one's biology or genetic constitution, as well as one's physical and cultural conditioning, are given--one has no choice in the matter.

One's very human subjectivity--the subject of volume II--to the extent that it is formed and developed by language, is influenced largely by others. Much of our identity--our language, beliefs, character, tastes, and physical and mental health--is an effect of others. Even where we enjoy some autonomy, the opinions and influence of our community and cultural traditions weigh heavily on our moral decisions. "No man is an island": not only are we physically incarnate in a material world, but humanly we are contextualized in a world of other people, present and past. Both these dimensions--material and social--are objective, i.e., realities which in most respects are less the effect of freedom of choice on the part of the individual concerned than the contrary. Extensively, in the exercise of one's freedom, they constitute that to which, and according to which, one must respond.

Since then individuals find themselves necessarily in the world and in society, and are explicitly more conscious of objects than of themselves, what is the meaning of this for morality and ethics? In the final analysis--everything. Even the most subjective of ethical theories will insist that individuals must be true to themselves. Certainly, that means being true to the total reality of one's existence, including the elements which are pre-determined and pre-determining. In this case the moral stance will be one of acceptance of our placement in nature and society and of the impetus and specification which this gives to the understanding and implementation of human

freedom. The objective or realist perspective enables personal and therefore ethical comprehension as moral freedom unfolds--while the alternatives of scientific determinism, monistic idealism or existential anxiety curtail this comprehension and growth.

It is common wisdom that every person needs the serenity to accept the things he cannot change, the courage to change the things he can, and the wisdom to know the difference. But the philosopher's task is to go further in order to uncover how the objective realities undergird and direct the exercise of freedom, for this gives the objective order its fully humane meaning. Understanding this is the special task of the present volume and explains in turn its synthetic structure. For the effort is not to establish one mode of ethics against all others, but to invoke the special competencies of each in a cooperative project intended to reinforce the objective dimension of the ethics as a science and to lay a foundation for a similar development of the dimension of subjectivity in the following volume. Together they will undergird a study of the recent emergence of the cultural dimension of ethics in the third volume as the new possibility for a fruitful integration of both objectivity and subjectivity.

This first volume has two parts. The first concerns what might be considered the substructures of an objective ethics, this is, attention to the external situation, pragmatic reasoning and social compromise. The second part concerns more properly the normative character of an objective ethics.

Part I begins with three papers which are concerned that ethics account of objective circumstances in which people live and with regard to which their difficult moral decision must be made. Abraham Edel examines the role of pragmatic tests for the ordering and reordering of human action. Joseph Fletcher agrees but wishes to see how this process can be guided by a further sense of love as motive force for acting thus. Vincent Punzo would want to introduce as will in mode of developing moral principles resulting in authentic practical wisdom.

However this focus upon weighing the changing circumstances of moral judgment is itself relativized as it is situated within the great geo-political ideologies of recent times. It is possible to read Marxism as a scientific integration of all that is objective into a necessitating dialectic. The chapter of Howard Parsons is appreciative of this objective and integrating capability. More basically, however, he is concerned to show the humanistic and social concerns which can underlie and inspire this project which, despite its recent political check, remains an influential factor in social movements and indeed in social and historical sciences.

The chapter of Peter Caws remains on this level, but with a quite different goal. This chapter is not concerned with what Rawls would call the different comprehensive visions, ethical or otherwise, which people might work out to inspire and guide their lives. Rather, given the diversity of these, its concern is how people and peoples can reach some moral agreement in these pluralistic circumstances.

With regard to ethics as normative, however, the above factors remain preparatory and supportive. Here they may be referred to as substructures, for they concern the given physical, personal and social realities, their changing character, and their ability to constitute possible goods among which one must choose.

But ethics goes further than presenting opportunities for practical action; it proceeds to speak of, indeed to constitute, the guides, norms and obligations of which the challenge, and at times the cross, of human responsibility is constituted. Without these norms, life would be as meaningless as a rudderless ship at the mercy of external winds and internal whimsy; with these norms, however, it can undertake the great actions in which personal and social accomplishment consist. But with these come also lasting obligations which test our will, bind us to others, and challenge our fortitude and commitment. It is most essential then that here--perhaps beyond other areas--we

understand the foundations on which moral obligations are based, the norms by which they are delineated, guided and integrated, and the combination of freedom and love which makes possible their fulfillment.

All this is the purpose of Part II: "Ethics as Objective and Normative". This turns first to the foundations of ethics in the dignity of human person. The unfolding appreciation of these in the various schools of philosophy--empirical, deontological and ontological--is traced in the chapter by G.F. McLean. David Schindler focuses this upon the ethical sphere by studying in detail the strengths and limits of the theory of L. Kohlberg. Here Schindler is concerned to identify a more adequate basis for moral judgment. This effort is carried further in the chapters of John Farrelly on the constitutive human good and William May on the seat of the moral worth of the human person.

The second subsection of Part II turns to the notion of natural law and normative reasoning. Vernon Bourke applies his life-long study of classical Scholastic ethics to articulating reason as moral norm, while Germain Grisez examines methods of ethical enquiry, integrating the insights of classical modern philosophy with a view to a contemporary evolution of natural-law reasoning.

Ethics, however, is not merely an individual matter, as often has been thought in the past. It is of the greatest importance to social life and is greatly impacted in turn by the life of society. Hence, in the last subsection of Part II it is important to consider the way in which normative reasoning engages, and is engaged by, the life of society. This is done by Patrick Coffey in his chapter on the role of prudential judgment in ethics and by philosopher-jurist John Noonan on the relation between natural law and positive law.

This volume constitutes then a concerted response by philosophers to the challenge of identifying the context and the components of an objective normative ethics for our times. It is not intended as a survey of all the factors involved: that would be so broad a task that it would limit outcomes to the superficial. Rather, it is a coordinated series of probes on key issues chosen in order to explore the situation of ethics at the crossroads. Specifically here in volume I, the effort is to construct the pillars of a response to the requirements and the possibilities of its objective dimension in our time.

This effort is not exclusive to philosophers, but has been undertaken as well by the Church as a great perennial moral teacher now facing new ethical and moral challenges. In the early '60s, in the Second Vatican Council, the Church was the first to take up the challenge to objective moral norms from the new attention to human subjectivity, its impact upon the religious roots of cultures, and hence upon social and personal moral life. The new development of attention to human subjectivity contributed greatly to the development of ethical sensitivity, as will be studied in volumes II and III. Being inexpertly managed, as necessarily are all new enterprises, the new developments, along with their great positive contribution, have had a relatively corrosive effect on the appreciation of the objective dimension of ethics treated in this first volume.

John Paul II as a philosopher before becoming Pope had focused upon the way in which the objective dimensions of the human person and of ethics continue and are enriched by the new attention to subjectivity. It is natural then that on these concerns he should write a relatively lengthy encyclical, *Splendor Veritatis*, setting then within the rich context of the long Christian religious experience. No. 115 notes that "this is the first time, in fact, that the Magisterium of the Church has set forth in detail the fundamental elements of this teaching, and presented their principles for the pastoral discernment necessary in practical and cultural situations which are complex and even crucial."



It seems useful therefore to include this document in its entirety as Appendix I to this volume on normative ethics. The first chapter of *Splendor Veritatis* provides a detailed unfolding of the contribution of the religious context to the moral dimension of life. It sees this particularly in intensifying the sense of human dignity through the teaching on the Incarnation and the vocation to share therein. The second chapter of the document studies the relation between human freedom and truth in considerably more comprehensive and integrated a manner than the previous sections of this volume. In so doing it develops also a defense of an objective ethics in the face of the challenges of scientism, subjectivism and relativism, all of them recent trends in ethics and moral theology. Finally, in its third chapter the encyclical speaks to the practical implications of objectivity and normativity in facing the moral dilemmas of our times.

By implication, this appendix, as the entire volume, raises the question of what might be at the root of the correlative and more recent attention to subjectivity. A initial sense of this can be garnered from a brief reflexion on the Encyclical by Paul Ricoeur made from his phenomenological and Protestant perspective. It is included here as appendix II in order to open critical distance from this volume's focus upon the objective and normative, and to lead into volume II on subjectivity and ultimately to the beginnings of their synthesis in volume III on ethics and culture. Together the three volumes should contribute to understanding the crossroads at which ethics finds itself in our days and to the effort to develop at this juncture a view of the moral life which is structured by effective normative guides, enlivened by creative freedom, and enriched by the multiple cultural experiences of all humankind.



# **Chapter I**

## **Pragmatic Tests and Ethical Insights**

*Abraham Edel*

The aim of this study is not to give a systematic or historical exposition of pragmatism in comparison to other philosophies, but to focus on a central theme, which it has developed and of which has been the prime philosophical representative. This theme will show its revolutionary impact in the field of ethics, and the difficulty in placing pragmatism among the 'isms'. The revolution of pragmatism entered as a burst of fresh air into a musty library; it stirred up and fought with other philosophical movements; and in a meta-philosophical fashion it tried to see itself as a culminating lesson of the fuller growth of human knowledge. Such pretensions are of course an old story in philosophy. Yet, almost a hundred years after Charles Peirce's early essays on "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear,"<sup>1</sup> the entire impact of the revolution is not yet fully appreciated.

The theme I shall deal with is the pragmatic treatment of ideas as human constructions developed in response to human problems and tested in the flux of human experience. Though no attempt will be made at a broader coverage, nor at a historical search of the succeeding generations of pragmatic thought, the impact of this approach in ethics will be set in a brief historical perspective and in particular relation to the contributions of James and Dewey. It will be presented through reflections on Dewey's moral theory, in part because Dewey made ethics central in his work and, more to our point, his elaboration of morality and its components is thoroughly explicit.

### **The Pragmatic Treatment of Ideas**

The pragmatic treatment of ideas arose in the context of a revised conception of what the world and what human beings and their functions are like. In the ancient and medieval philosophies mind was conceived of as pure act or energy in which, after the appropriate sensory stimulation, the structure of the real was grasped directly. The real world itself was conceived either, as in Aristotle, as eternally the same or as the fixed order of creation. In Cartesian dualism the separation of mind from body became hardened; ideas being a direct expression of spirit, the world of mind was removed from that of nature. In the main empirical tradition from Locke onward, the source of ideas lay in the building blocks of sensations or in the impressions minds received passively from the actions of the physical world. Sensations themselves gravitated together to form our ideas of objects and relations according to laws of the mind modelled on the Newtonian image. The contextual picture of the world was the Newtonian world system, no matter to what extent empiricism was driven by its inner problems to become a self-enclosed phenomenalism.

The Kantian and idealist philosophies reinstated the active character of the mind in relation to knowledge, and the Hegelian idealisms restored the unity of the world on idealist terms. It was the evolutionary view of world development and the place of man in nature however, that naturalized knowledge and its processes. The pragmatic treatment of ideas reflected the changed conception of mind and the intellect as human powers, which had developed in the evolutionary process and functioned to maintain and extend human life and to resolve its practical problems. What is often overlooked is that, with the restoration of mind to nature, the conception of the practical itself

became a much richer notion. This is most evident in the treatment of ideas in Peirce (1839-1914), James (1842-1910), and Dewey (1859-1952).

Pragmatism presents an activist-instrumental theory of ideas: conceptions are assessed by what they enable us to accomplish regarding those problems to which they are addressed. Peirce's early papers show a kind of laboratory empiricism in which the meaning of an idea is equated with the habits of action and the practical experimental consequences implied by the use of that idea. This aspect became central in what was later called "operationalism." Sometimes this has been exaggerated into an equation of an idea with the operations by which we apply it; more reasonably, however, it is limited to the recognition that operations constitute necessary, though not always sufficient, conditions of meaning. Peirce developed his pragmatism into a well-rounded understanding of the method of science, which included a basic empiricism, its inherent limitations of imprecision, fallibility, probability as against certainty, and the instrumental rather than self-evident character of axioms.

James reached his pragmatic approach through his psychological investigation.<sup>2</sup> The basic stuff of experience is the stream of consciousness, a constant flux in which directional movements give expression to human purposes. Out of this, meanings emerge as perching-points, which appear as the differences the presence of an idea makes in experience and acting. Classification and ideational orderings reflect human interests and processes, and there is a constant feedback in experience. Meanings are altered by refinement and reinforcement at every point in the flow of experience, so that ideas are always at work and being worked on. The meaning of an idea is, as in Peirce, its practical effects; the truth of an idea lies in its working out satisfactorily. In contrast to Peirce, James broadened the terms 'practical effects' and 'working out satisfactorily'. Though he gave them a scientific interpretation where evidence was available, in relation to morality and religion the wider meanings of 'practical', such as effects on our life and its problems, and yielding a satisfactory life, came to the fore.<sup>3</sup> This broadening was mediated by James' view that science itself rested on the human emotional need for finding and making order, and for ensuring stability and reliability. In general, too, James was an opponent of the tight system, and intertwined the themes of individualism, pluralism, novelty, creativity, and responsible choice, with the Heraclitean sense of the change, practical orientation, and the constantly constructive and reconstructive character of experience.

Dewey's treatment of ideas is most explicitly instrumental; it is consciously set against regarding ideas as portrayals of antecedently existing reality.<sup>4</sup> Dewey constantly opposed dualism in all its forms. Ideas are constructions which humans have developed for their purposes out of experience. They are context-bound and purpose-oriented, addressed to problem-situations which provoke inquiry and furnish it with implicit criteria for success. Ideas are generalized only in order to try them out in future experience and its problems are what has proved helpful in resolving those of the present. Their evaluation rests on what is--and how it is--successfully accomplished. Wholesale antecedent criteria are inadequate in judging ideas since different criteria arise in different kinds of problems. Generalized principles or lessons can guide inquiry in the specific situations, not as rigid dictates, but as leads or as methods. Nothing, however, is a substitute for the imaginative and sensitive treatment of the present by an insight which proposes clues, develops alternatives, and refines ideas. The character of that insight itself reflects the depth and consolidation of accumulated experience.

There is an explicit psychological grounding in Dewey's work for this entire treatment of knowledge and method. For all that Peirce and James talked about practice, they--especially James--seemed held back by the Cartesian problem and did not carry through what was implicit in

their own program. James, for example, saw clearly the problem of the organization of perception, but stopped short at the problem of the organization of response. Dewey, however, set forth the scope of the whole task quite early in his work, especially in the paper on "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology"<sup>5</sup> which served as a model for much of his later development, including *The Theory of Valuation*. He integrated his treatment of the function of consciousness with that of the organization of perception, suggesting how perception was in part motor and the motor itself was unavoidably perceptual.

Several features of this whole pragmatic approach should be noted.

(1) The approach is genetically and functionally oriented. The genetic context and functional roles are drawn up on the basis of past experience and insight coupled with present needs and purposes that underlie the problem situation. These roles are conceived, not as irrelevant to inquiry into truth, but as the matrix in which specific inquiry gets its structure and criteria of judgment.

(2) The problem-situation, which is Dewey's way of characterizing the starting-point of an inquiry, is understood initially in bio-psychological terms. "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" shows the way in which a stimulus, far from being separately identifiable, acquires its meaning from past experience, and how a problem arises from the conflict of direction of action prompted by different meanings. The structure of the problem-situation is thus seen as a whole, with discrepant elements requiring reconstruction in order to allow liberated energy in determinate unified action. His later *Human Nature and Conduct*,<sup>6</sup> describes the problem situation in terms of impulse serving as a pivot of reconstruction when there is a conflict of established habits through which the self is constituted. Intelligence is the habits of reconstruction which operate to bring about a smooth reconstruction.

Nevertheless, the characterization of the problem-situation need not be always in terms of its underlying psychological structure. It can be set by reference to whatever discipline in the terms of which the problem arises. For example, in his *Liberalism and Social Action*,<sup>7</sup> Dewey describes socio-historical problems in terms of the specific social forces producing changes and causing friction by their entrenched ways. In these terms, the social outlook of liberalism has the office of intelligent transition so as to mediate change without violence. In purely theoretical issues arising in the growth of science, the problems may themselves be cast in terms of conflict within the specific inquiry, with the method of science being the organized mode of intelligence working toward problem-resolution.

(3) Finding the meaning of ideas in possible consequences and practical differences implies for pragmatism a future-orientation. This forward element is fairly new in the dominant theoretical place it gives to prediction, guidance, and control. Whereas scientific success requires theory, experience, and prediction, the ancient emphasis on the theoretical-contemplative side reflected not merely enthusiasm for mathematics but the lack of a well-developed empirical science. In spite of Francis Bacon's demand for experiments that yield both fruit and light, the empirical tradition in its Humean cast stressed more the conservative role of custom as past accumulation in the understanding of beliefs. As pragmatism includes not only the continuing character of experience but the forward-looking attitude, the analysis of theory as the predictive element becomes constitutive in the theory of meaning rather than simply consequential.

(4) Since the meaning of ideas is thus to be found in their forward reference to reconstructions in experience, and any structures that arise are interpreted in terms of the experiential continuum, there is no room within the approach for wholly transcendent reference. This entails a treatment of discourse of the transcendent as the symbolic representation of the experiential, the practical, and

human activity rather than as pointing to a separate reality. It is not surprising that James generally deals with religion as beliefs that service human needs and strivings, and that in *A Common Faith*, Dewey's humanistic naturalism in religion sees it as a quality of experience in which men expand their selves to embrace more permanent social aims.<sup>8</sup>

(5) None of these aspects of the pragmatic approach need be taken as anti-intellectual in the sense of denying a concept of truth, though of course in particular writers they may take such a turn. The approach is rather concerned with treating the concept of truth itself in a pragmatic way, by showing how it functions in human life. For James, truth is what is verified, corroborated, and assimilated into the body of beliefs. For Dewey, it is warranted belief. Peirce had conceived of truth as an ideal approached asymptotically; but this ideal is itself in part a function of the character of the method through which it is approached. In effect, for pragmatism, truth is a concept humans elaborate to distinguish what is stable and dependable from what is unreliable within the flux of experience.

(6) Reality in the sense of a world with some definite features, though construed as a lesson of experience, is presupposed rather than conjured away in pragmatism. A fixed stereotype, to which pragmatists often themselves succumb, contrasts the instrumentalism of ideas in the pragmatic approach with the "realism" of other philosophies. This realism treats ideas as reflections or representations of reality, while the pragmatist treats ideas as tools for practical purposes. Other philosophies then dismiss pragmatism as turning away from reality to ephemeral utility and expediency, while the pragmatist convicts the others of unverifiable claims. Such stereotypes are not prone to advance philosophical thought, and sharp contrast itself crumbles when each side is examined seriously. The notions of reflection and representation embody a large measure of human construction, and there is a strong enough force of reality in the pragmatic idea of constructions turning out to work well or of the instrumental being, in fact, useful. A clear enough distinction between what represents and what is instrumental can be found within experience and between parts of experience, without making the issue a transcendent or metaphysical one. The idea of reality in this sense is itself a hard-working and useful one.

Of course, the pragmatic characterization of reality has its own distinctive features. It has a basically temporal character, recognizes the constant presence of alternative possibilities, and focuses upon constant emergence of novel elements. For James, the emphasis falls on the plastic, unfinished nature of reality, with man's will at the frontier. For Dewey, too, the sense of creative possibilities is strong.

(7) The pragmatic treatment of ideas, if well-grounded, should have sufficient reflexive application to make clear its own superiority to the ideas it is trying to supplant. As we have seen earlier, its own view is built on an account of a world that is undergoing constant change; on a human race that evolving and is continually engaged in the tasks of surviving and of maintaining a home upon the globe; and on a specific account of psychological processes of sense, thought, and feeling. It would be folly for the pragmatic conception of ideas to seek a status antecedent to these hard-earned lessons of human knowledge. The pragmatic treatment of ideas must claim to be those lessons put to work, while at the same time growing into a critique by which the accumulation of these lessons itself may become more effective. In its treatment of older conceptions, such as the Aristotelian or the Cartesian, it must do more than disagree, supplant, or condemn; it also must show how they attempted responses to problems in the state of the then current accounts of the world and of the specific processes and functioning of man. Thus Aristotle's view of thought as the mind's assimilation to the structure of reality is not just metaphysical postulation, for his culmination of accounts of the way in which nutrition and sensing take place.

Descartes' sharp cleavage of mind and matter itself expresses an attempt at reckoning with the state of physiological explanation in his day, and the kind of ordering that could be achieved in physics and in mathematics at that stage of interpretation. Both Aristotle and Descartes were attempting refashionings which would provide a more adequate conceptual framework for grappling with problems in all areas of human life and thought. In the manner of philosophy, they were creative constructions putting together on a total scale what is available at the time. As hard choices had to be made at every point, it is not surprising that some conceptual experiments worked out less well than others. Philip Frank once remarked, concerning the controversy over the Copernican theory as against the Ptolemaic, that the total choice was not a simple matter of simplicity in physics, but whether to have a simple (traditional) theology and a complex physics, or a simple physics and a complicated theology.

In general, then, the pragmatic conception of philosophy itself is congruent with its whole approach to ideas. Philosophy is the critique of the conceptual framework with which men approach their world in order to refine and revise it in the light of the growth of their knowledge and experience, and to make it a more effective instrument for coping with further experience. While in practice Dewey sometimes substituted a tirade against dualism for a more complete pragmatic analysis of the older outlook, and at times he concentrated too exclusively on the social function of a view which he was contrasting with his own, on the whole the pragmatic attitude to historical philosophies involves a much more responsible reckoning than is found in either blanket dismissal or passionate revival.

How does all this apply to ethical theory and ethical insight?

### **Pragmatic Recasting of Ethical Theory**

The impact of the pragmatic approach in ethical theory will emerge from a consideration of five major themes: 1. naturalism and the bases of human morality; 2. the permeating sense of change; 3. the functional treatment of moral ideas and categories; 4. the reinterpretation of major dichotomies: the cognitive and the practical, the descriptive and the prescriptive, the social and the individual, the causal and the creative; and 5. the nature and scope of ethical insight. These themes will be dealt with chiefly in relation to Dewey's presentation of ethics.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Naturalism and the Bases of Morality*

Dewey's approach to ethics is basically that of a philosophical naturalism which considers man to be a material organism or part of the natural world, whose special psychological and cultural qualities are understandable in terms of complex interrelations and a history of creative adaptations to environment and to the human milieu. Thus, the bases of morality are to be sought in the wider domain of human life and activity, rather than in some special external force or in some isolated distinctive faculty.

Dewey calls attention to three roots of morality, that is, to parts of the human phenomena which are worked up into the construct of ethics.<sup>10</sup> The first is the whole domain of human desire, goal-seeking, and purpose-formation. This is crystallized in the concept of the good and in those theories of teleological ethics which direct themselves toward the good. The second looks to phenomena that arise in the interrelation of humans whenever they live in groups. These are phenomena of the regulation of claims or demands which people make upon one another in virtue of the situations in which they find themselves. The concepts of moral law, right, and obligation

give expression to this domain. The third is the field of mutual reactions of people to one another in virtue of their mutual actions and relations. It consists of approbation or condemnation, mutual appraisal or criticism, and encouragement or resentment. This is conceptualized in the notions of virtue and vice.

Dewey seems to find his fields partly from phenomena divided in a particular way and partly from the conceptual reflection of phenomena in the great historical schools of western ethics, with some of the variations falling along cultural or national lines. Perhaps the division could be carried out in other ways. Think, for example, of the areas of immediacy, that is, of pleasures and pains, satisfactions and dissatisfactions, which produced the hedonistic theories; of the break-up of human relations along the line of roles as a favorite recent sociological concept; or of the alignment of virtue and vice with the specific perennial task of raising children. Perhaps the significant domains of phenomena for morality change and are more culturally defined than, as it were, a set of great natural divides. The significant point in Dewey's pragmatic naturalism, however, is not so much the particular detail as the kind of enterprise in which he is engaged. Morality does not have a special separate subject-matter, but is based in the whole set of human phenomena that arise out of the makeup of man as a biological being in a socio-cultural milieu. In the long run, the advance of moral theory will best discover the joints for theoretical division, whether they shift or are constant, and given their degree of constancy. Instead of antecedently setting a rigidly fixed domain, this discovery will result from an interplay of the concepts and the phenomena.

### *The Permeating Sense of Change*

Reinforced by the recent experience of both secular ethical systems and religious ethical systems, there is definitely a kind of Heraclitean basis in Dewey's ethics, in the sense that no matter what ethics one holds the problems of stability and of change impinge upon its very core. In a pragmatic ethics, and for that matter in a naturalist or in a materialist ethics, this is recognized as being a constitutive element rather than an external property of disintegration or corruption. This being the case, the historical element must be put right into the definition of a moral situation. Moreover, the pragmatic epistemology of ideas as undergoing constant revision in the feedback of experience, points in the same direction. The moral experience, the solution of a moral problem, and the definition of a moral situation, all are characterized by a historical-critical-decisional center. Dewey makes this point in so simple a fashion that its significance may escape us. He says that there are two kinds of situations: one in which we know what is right and are tempted not to do it, and the other in which we are in doubt about what is right because of some conflict in the analysis of the situation. Relevantly enough, he gives the example of a man who is torn by patriotism on the one hand and by the belief that his country is waging an unjust war on the other hand.<sup>11</sup> Though the former type of situation is usually taken to be the prototype of a moral situation, this should not be done, because there the agent knows what is right. The situation that demands decision about what is right is the genuinely moral one. In this claim, Dewey parts company with the tradition in which morality is an eternal system that can be grasped and needs only to be actualized in conduct. He parts company with the Kantian type of theory in which what is moral can be readily determined by invoking the categorical imperative, and the central phenomenon of obligation is a struggle between the rational, guided by that imperative, and subjective inclinations that tempt to deviation.

In the contemporary world the rate of change has accelerated and the expectation of change, continual even within a single generation, has itself become one of the fixed points of a realistic



outlook. The centrality of moral decision in Dewey's sense has broken through all traditional systems; the most dogmatic and the rationalistic have found that the elements of variety, conflict, and need for creativity have only been disguised in the past by focusing upon the eternal and the systematic. It is not that the world has changed from the stable to the changing, but that the increased tempo has revealed the inner historicity that was always present.

The consequence of this emphasis on change in Dewey is methodological reorientation of ethical theory. He does not expect fixed results or answers. Instead, he aims at methods or modes of analysis. Perhaps he overdoes this, and gives us moral methodology where men want moral answers. In part he would say, as the existentialists do later, that the individual has to work out answers for himself in the full detail of the situation; this individualism is in Dewey as it is in James. Apart from this, the question of the extent to which one can get definite answers in a given domain is not an *a priori* one, but depends on the rate of change and the degree of complexity. It is to be learned in the progress of the inquiry, and is not determined by the character of the concepts of ethics as such. Thus, we are brought to the third theme: the recognition that our moral categories are doing jobs, and that their understanding must be in terms of these offices.

### *The Functional Treatment of Moral Ideas and Categories*

A functional treatment of moral judgment itself is dictated by the basic view of consciousness and thought that pervades Dewey's treatment of all experience. A moral judgment has a mediating role, coming between the problem situation, whose understanding grows in reflection, and the envisaged and proposed good that guides the resolution in decision and action. A moral judgment is thus futuristic in its reference, both with respect of prediction and with respect of its moral quality.

The reorientation of ethical theory in terms of a critical-decision function carries implications for all the major ethical concepts. Their specific jobs or functions have to be recanvassed with reference to their specific material and the kinds of goings-on in their area of competence. Looked at in this way, Dewey's discussions of good and value, right and obligation, and virtue and vice constitute remarkable lessons in the application of the basic pragmatic treatment of ideas.

In the case of good, tradition has stressed a catalogue of ends as goals in human life. The common philosophical conception of the good as the object of desire or of striving embodied this view, sometimes in a teleological and sometimes in a naturalistic setting. In this domain the job of ethics would be to identify the ends in sufficient isolation and fixity to serve as permanent and perennial objects for striving, and to separate and put in their ancillary place the means to attain those ends. Dewey's objection, very simply, is that this is the wrong job, and on several counts. For it asks one to find a fixity of ends which is neither in fact present, nor possible to achieve. Ends are in flux. They are complex rather than simple. Their very meaning is to be found in their consequences in human experience, and the attempt to catch them in a concept of happiness or pleasure or some specific inventory is hopeless. Moreover, to attempt to do so would be to isolate ends from means and ends from consequences, which separation rests basically upon an incorrect human psychology.

Here Dewey elaborates his idea of end-in-view as a pivot of reorganization in a complex problem-situation, rather than as an ultimate and separable goal. He uses the striking analogy of the end as a target set up to organize shooting and to render it more effective.<sup>12</sup> As an application of his whole analysis of the problem-situation, an end-in-view is taken to be an hypothesis proposed in reconstruction. The adequacy of aiming at the end is tested in terms of the

consequences of the activity in liberating energies, resolving the initial problem, and thus rendering experience more meaningful. In effect, Dewey challenged the traditional means-ends hierarchical relation, which has dominated both ethics and social science, and wished to substitute quite different categories grounded upon a different psychological theory. This is why we find him constantly attacking the dualism of means and end, the sharp separation of fact and value, and the dichotomy of scientifically ascertainable means and empirically untestable end. Dewey regards these as simply modern versions of the old dualism between the realms of nature and of spirit, with value being placed in the latter and shut off from responsible scientific reckoning.

The job which he sets up, instead, for the concept of good is the constant critical function of organizing interests in human life, selecting among them, capturing them in a set of hypotheses to be continually tested by their consequences in experience--both in the immediate quality and meaningful character of experience and in the longer-range consequences of acting on those hypotheses--constantly guiding choice in a critical way, and discriminating the better from the worse. At one point, Dewey had toyed with the idea of recognizing "better" rather than "good" as the fundamental ethical term, on the ground that preference was the basic ethical act.<sup>13</sup> In his *Theory of Valuation*<sup>14</sup> this critical function takes the form of construing value as basically appraisal, rather than as the apparently more simple and isolated act of prizing, for value does not lie in some simple fact of liking, or some set feeling or attitude possessed. In truth, prizing and attitudes are psychologically set in a framework of care or concern, so that the value judgment lies in an appraisal of means and consequences in the having of the liking or attitude. Valuation thus involves the continual emergence, organization, and testing of criteria in appraisal.

On the question of right and obligation, Dewey faces the traditional notion of the moral law as a set of general commands from which our duties are derived. Here again, he is concerned with the fixity of the moral law and its separation from consequences. There is also the opposite tradition, as in Utilitarianism, of those who sought to reduce right and wrong to a purely administrative status in carrying out the good. Against the first, are the obvious historical difficulties which arise from the variety in rules, problems of interpretation and application. Here, his task is to show that the pragmatic treatment of ideas, by finding their meaning in practical consequences, fits more closely what really goes on than the attempted regulation of life by a system of rules. Against those who would dispense with distinctive notions of right and wrong, however, Dewey invokes the functional approach of asking what job is done by the category of right. Since it is that of giving expression to an ordered regulation of the field of human claims that arise in every group, he does not think the category can be dispensed with. One can insist, however, upon evaluating the content put into a scheme of rights in terms of its consequences with respect to the good. Thus, if men draw up a list of basic human rights, the justification of including among them the right to a job or the right to education, for example, is the role of a job in the modern economy in providing the necessary conditions and opportunities for the good life, and the necessity of education for furnishing both the skills and the development of spirit which makes possible valuable activity.

It is worth noting that the familiar complaint against pragmatism, that it does not admit of absolutes, is misleading. It is the concept of absolute itself which undergoes pragmatic treatment. Insofar as it means unquestioning acceptance, it has, of course, no place in the critical functioning of ethical concepts. However, if it refers to strict injunctions that reject exceptions in a given range, then pragmatic absolutes are possible where they are justified by the decision that some areas, for good reason, require absolute rules. Thus, the rule against smoking when your plane takes off is a reasonable absolute, justified in terms of our knowledge of the nature of planes and fuel and the

risks involved. Principles like not interfering with freedom of thought and expression, or the even more basic principle of every person being treated with dignity, quite readily fit in an absolute way into a pragmatic or naturalist ethics. They do require a justification which involves a fuller understanding of the nature of humans and their possibilities, the desirable form of human relations, and so on, but these may be such as to support the principles perennially rather than for just a brief period. In general, in considering the stability of right, Dewey is prone to emphasize principles for analyzing situations as against rules to be directly followed. But this again is a question of the degree of complexity and change found in given areas of human life, and hence involves empirical judgments.

In the third set of major ethical concepts, virtue and vice, Dewey seems to try an experiment in generalization. Again, this is required by the historical variety and complexity, and the pragmatic appreciation that the meaning of a virtue always lies in the consequences of specific conduct and feeling rather than in some "essence." The virtue of thrift in one economy becomes the vice of hoarding in another. The meaning of chastity changes in many details as the regulation of human marriage and of human relations takes on varied institutional forms or undergoes change. Though it might be possible to find phenomenological constancies, these might be related in turn to presumed psychological invariants, thus requiring empirical evidence. Dewey tries instead to generalize, or almost to "methodologize" the theory of virtue. He interprets the constant element in virtue as being the stress on such perennial traits required in any genuine human interest as sincerity, whole-heartedness, persistence, impartiality, and conscientiousness--all taken not as isolable traits but as aspects of a rounded character. The detail of the experiment does not especially concern us here. Whether one will accept this path, or insist upon some highly general character-traits more oriented to specific content in human relations, may very well rest on what psychological theory proves acceptable in the long run about the nature of character and personality development. What is significant about Dewey's approach here is its pragmatic effort to assign a role to the virtue concept in terms of the way it can function.

### **Reinterpretation of Major Dichotomies**

Contemporary ethics has been much exercised by the contrasts of the cognitive and the practical, the descriptive and the prescriptive, the individual and the social, and the causal and the creative. A pragmatic ethics finds here ample scope for employing its treatment of ideas.

The question whether ethics is a cognitive or a practical discipline is, in one form or another, a very old issue. It seems to carry with it the controversy concerning whether moral judgments can be established as true or false, or whether they are arbitrary fiats of one sort or another. In medieval philosophy, some such dichotomy found expression in the controversy over whether morality issued from reason or will (in theological inquiry, from God's reason or God's will). In the 17th and 18th centuries, there was the controversy between Cambridge Platonists and sentiment theorists as to whether morality expressed intellectual truths or affective paths of sentiment. In the 20th century, there was first emotive theory which made a sharp separation between cognitive belief and emotive attitude, and assigned moral utterances to the attitude column as characterized by persuasive force rather than rational ground. This was followed by the continuing attempt to reorient moral discourse as somehow prescriptive rather than descriptive, as a kind of doing or performing rather than a kind of knowing. When ancient writers, like Aristotle, distinguished practice from theory, theory was the very narrow field of that which could not be otherwise, and practice the wide field in which transformation and control might arise. Thus to call something

practical did not disparage its cognitive character. Medicine, engineering and ethics stand together as far as practicality and cognitivity are involved.

The pragmatic treatment of such dichotomies is to regard them as experimental constructs for the understanding of human functioning. If the dichotomies get us into trouble in psychology or ethics they reveal their own bankruptcy, not the irrationality of the phenomena. Thus, if we give or acknowledge reasons for doing something, a dichotomy according to which we could have good reasons for believing but not for doing is somehow wrong and must be either refined or replaced. Dewey is, in fact, much more positive in his rejection of some of these dichotomies, especially those between cognition and will, between cognition and feeling, and between thinking and doing, as representing the old and incorrect faculty psychology. We need not follow here his line of argumentation, nor the way in which he attempts an integrated account. It is central to his psychology from the very early treatments of effort and emotion to the later criticisms of the means-end dichotomy as also representing a cultural dualism--separating drab means from vivid enjoyment in the character of our work and pleasure institutions. It continues into his very late critique of emotivism as simply reading the irrationality of our social ways of resolving disputes by violence into the nature of human psychology.<sup>15</sup> In his more analytical treatment of detailed points in the psychology of ethics, Dewey constantly rejects the falling apart of intention and consequences, motive and action, willing and thinking, and habit and intelligence. The pragmatic key to dilemmas resting on such dichotomies is never to argue them, but to undercut them by revealing the incorrect presuppositions which enter into the construction of the concepts so dichotomized.

The same pragmatic attitude finds itself wholly out of sympathy with the tremendously imposing dichotomy of fact and value or is and ought, which has so dominated 20th century thought. It is true that if you succeed in making the gulf unbridgeable, then bridging it will be impossible, and no logical derivation of such a value, or ought, from such a fact, or is, will be possible. Most of the arguments are therefore beside the point. The pragmatic question concerns the presuppositions and purposes that were built into such constructed notions of fact and value to begin with. Are they correct presuppositions and worthwhile purposes, and are the resultant notions viable? If the presupposition is that having a value or asserting an ought is somehow not a natural human phenomenon, then it is questionable to begin with. If the purpose is to prevent the smuggling of aims and criteria into an argument without rendering them explicit, that is laudable, but if it is to render value judgments arbitrary and immune from rational criticism, then it is far from laudable. If the resultant notion is workable, then we should be able to set apart the value terms of our language from the fact terms, or the value uses from the fact uses; we should be able to distinguish pure describing in such a way as to be without values and pure valuing, hence being without factual judgment. All of these separation processes seem to be dubious unless we beg the issue by some presupposition of pure sensation and pure feeling, or of pure thinking and pure doing.

We cannot here even begin the reassessment of the fact-value issue and its alleged consequence of the value-free character of science and the science-free character of value. But it is clear enough that a pragmatic treatment goes back into the construction of the dichotomy and assesses its uses rather than argues from it as an unanalyzed set of categorial terms. In pragmatic ethics the emphasis should fall, by-passing the general issue, on analyzing specifically how judgments of desirability are related to judgments of desire--which is precisely the task of constructing the notion of good to carry out its assigned functions--and how judgments of right and obligation are related to specific accounts of the good life.

Nowhere is the insight which stems from the pragmatic treatment of ideas more apparent than in the treatment of the dichotomy of the social and the individual. We live in a world of thought in which the individual and the social are constantly contrasted; in which self-love or egoism is taken for granted; in which in fact a dominant problem of ethical theory for several centuries has been to prove that each of us will achieve his own well-being by setting as the ethical goal the general welfare--or, perhaps more often, to ease our conscience about pursuing our own welfare by demonstrating that in so doing we will bring about the general welfare.

In this intellectual atmosphere it is refreshing to see the pragmatic treatment of categories at work. When Dewey writes about egoism we are reminded of the simplicity with which Aristotle, in writing about friendship, faced the question whether a man should love himself. It all depends, says Aristotle, on whether he is a good man. If he is, then he has something to love, if he is not then there is nothing there to love. So, too, Dewey turns his discussion to the content of the self and the kind of self. As a self grows up in a cultural milieu, the kind of self that results is a social-institutional product. Acquisitive and predatory institutions develop a being whose orientation is directed to what he can get out of others; cooperative institutions are better able to produce satisfying interpersonal relations. Thus, the question is never really whether to favor oneself or others, but what kind of a self to cultivate. This is a normative issue of social practice. The sharp opposition of self and other in recent centuries is a construct of a special kind of individualistic society in which men were turned into competitive-predatory atoms. Such a concept, and such a self, is not required by nature or the human makeup, nor is it any longer required by material scarcity. The positive practical direction for ethics is to construct a concept of individuality in which the antithesis of social and atomic individual will not be of the essence.

An important consequence of such an approach is that the sharp division of social ethics and individual ethics is considerably weakened. We see this in practice all about us today. Many traditional social issues, such as war and patriotism or conformity and obedience, come increasingly to demand decisions in terms of individual conscience; and many traditional issues of individual concern, such as care for one's fellow-man, come increasingly to require social formulations in terms of institutions of distributive justice and social security.

Let us look briefly at the final dichotomy of the causal and the creative. Traditional philosophy has accentuated the dichotomy of determinism and freedom. It has asked, for example, whether man is to be regarded as a machine, and insisted that any deterministic account of man renders ethics impossible. Once again, the pragmatic treatment of ideas would tackle the formulation of the question rather than plunge into the argument on one side or the other. Historically, this is not wholly accurate, for James took sides against determinism as making the ethical concepts of regret and remorse meaningless.<sup>16</sup> He was fighting against a concept of determinism that he took to allow no room for novelty and creativity. Today, even the question whether man is a machine would have to face up to the fact that the notion of a machine itself undergoes change. It has moved from the cruder notion of the old mechanical contraption to the notion of a subtle electrical system. If a man is to be regarded as a machine, the concept of a machine will itself have to be transformed to render possible the kind of machinations that characterize a human being. The complete robot will have to make decisions, write poetry, philosophize, and exercise freedoms.

Dewey's analysis of the freedom issue in ethics takes as its point of departure the functions exercised by a category of responsibility.<sup>17</sup> Why do we need such a concept? Because it is part of the process of human regulation and human guidance, it presupposes human plasticity--the human ability to become sensitive to finer discriminations, to plan and make strategies, to engage in problem-solving by use of the intellect--in brief, to learn in a uniquely human way. As Dewey puts

it strikingly in one context, we do not praise a saint or blame an idiot, for the one is fixed in his virtue, while it is useless to blame the other. Praise and blame, the assignment of responsibility and the finding of fault are in place where human beings are sufficiently plastic to be able to learn, where pointing things out and mutual accountability will make them different. Responsibility is not necessarily retrospective; even in looking back its purpose is the prospective one of developing a certain kind of individuality. Thus, Dewey's whole attempt to develop a theory of responsibility and of freedom in this empirical sense is not bound at all to the dilemmas of the traditional controversy over determinism. Some measure of determinism is implied in the dependability of the world that all learning entails, but the specific concept of determinism arises in the context of scientific investigation and its outcome should be settled there. The precise extent of such determinism that is possible would no doubt be of interest to ethics in its practical concerns, but it would not alter the functions of the concept of responsibility.

Dewey's treatment of responsibility should not be regarded as primarily manipulative. Its core is the possibility of human beings learning. How much of the engendering of learning requires manipulation of situation and attitude, and how much is rather stimulation, direction of attention, and awakening of insight, is not an *a priori* determination of pragmatism as such but an empirical issue of educational theory. The pragmatic analysis of responsibility thus does not belittle the dignity of the individual. It may instead underscore that sensitivity and insight which lies close to the heart of human dignity, and which makes possible human creativity.

### **The Nature and Scope of Ethical Insight**

In conclusion, we may ask what would be the interpretation of ethical insight on a Deweyan type of naturalistic ethics, especially in the light of his social instrumentalism.

Ethical insight carries a great burden in moral processes. Even with a well-developed conceptual framework, it is invoked in the major tasks of application. Insight is needed in grasping the structure of the problem situation and thus in formulating the very questions to which the moral deliberation is addressed. It is needed in selecting among moral principles those which are to be deemed relevant to the analysis of the situation and which will point out the direction of solution. It is involved in selecting from the factual picture the elements which are relevant to the issues, and in interpreting the principles so as to apply them to these facts. As it plays a part in envisaging the consequences of proposed policies of action on those concerned in the outcome, it involves an ability to see the situation from the perspective of differing agents and differing interests. Finally, it is bound up with the act of decision in the unified grasp of all the factors held together as constituting the answer to the problem.

In general, then, insight has many faces. It is always selective in spirit; sometimes it is analytic in breaking up a field, sometimes structural in proposing a design, sometimes imaginative in envisaging alternatives and in sympathetically looking at them from different perspectives, and sometimes determinative in its synthetic formulation of the adopted solution. Possibly several different human abilities are involved. The traditional treatments of the concept in psychological literature have been far from definitive, and it is not always distinguished from intelligence in general. While its dominant character is that of directly finding the novel, it shades at some points into the creative and at others into the decisional.

Attempts to reduce the role of insight in ethical processes are rarely successful. Any particular insight can, of course, be made the subject of special inquiry; if we wish to pursue its judgment of relevance or importance, we can render criteria explicit and look for evidence that they are satisfied

in the given verdict. But insight will be involved in this process too, and we cannot pursue all insights all the time. Instead, at such points traditional schools begin to talk of the need for good moral habits as a presupposed background, or to assert that moral judgment presupposes moral upbringing, or that Aristotle invokes the man of practical wisdom as a model, that Hume and Adam Smith take for granted the verdicts of a sympathetic impartial spectator, and so on. All in all, it sometimes looks as if ethical judgment concerns the one-tenth of the iceberg that is above the surface, and ethical insight deals with the submerged nine-tenths.

Dewey does not give a systematic analysis of ethical insight as such, but there is ample material in his treatment of moral processes from which to draw an outline of its character. In his methodological works there is also much concerning such notions as suggestion, imagination, apprehension, understanding, or, occasionally, intuition.<sup>18</sup> Certainly insight could not be a mysterious faculty operating with epistemic power, as in rationalistic concepts of intuition. Dewey speaks rather of the growth of understanding, in which there is an increased definiteness, coherence, and the grasp of new uses or applications. Intellectual progress involves a rhythm of direct understanding or apprehension with indirect or mediated understanding or comprehension. In short, the psychological immediacy is recognized, but its epistemic role lies not in certifying truth but in suggesting lines of reflection and extension of inquiry.

In ethics, on the individual side, we touch the nature of insight best in Dewey's account of moral deliberation as a dramatic, active, imaginative rehearsal of various paths of conduct, in which impulses and sensitive reactions get the opportunity to show themselves. This enhanced awareness of the agent regarding outcomes within himself, in others, and in the surrounding context, acts in turn upon the present process of decision. On the social side, insight is best understood as the sensitive use of a systematically organized social equipment which furnishes a refined power of discrimination. We may draw here on Dewey's treatment of intelligence itself as a set of habits of reconstruction rather than as an unanalyzed power, and on his recognition of the social basis of such habits. Thus in his writings on social philosophy, he speaks of intelligence as embodied in technology, understood as a growing segment of human activity in which the methods of intelligence become established as standing operative procedures. He appeals for the extension of such social intelligence to social and political issues and institutions.

We can think of insight in a quite comparable way. It need not be limited to the sagacity and imagination of individuals facing novel situations, important though that is. Insight is the cutting edge of social and cultural experience, expressed in its developed methods of dealing with problems. The use of a rich language in a cultivated people is perhaps the clearest case, though it is usually taken for granted. The insight is constant even in ordinary speech, as new formulations are made in every act of speech. Similarly, a legal system shows sensitive insight to the extent that it has and applies established complex modes of analyzing legal problems. These manifest in lines of inquiry and evidence and the types of safeguards required in expressing a comprehensive ideal of justice. So, too, an educational system prepares a culture with insight insofar as it cultivates a deliberative, thoughtful, and sensitive outlook instead of a deadening conformity in stereotyped reactions and blunted sensitivity. Thus, the appeal in a Deweyan kind of pragmatism is less to exceptional moral individuals as models--though these play an important part--than to the growth of institutional instrumentalities and intellectual and cultural techniques for dealing with the kind of problems that are likely to be central for moral decision. Included in this framework is the conception of individuality which frees the individual for his share in moral decision.

Such an approach to insight is not simply a social bias, for experience, as Dewey came increasingly to recognize, is a socio-cultural process. The main motif of pragmatism in its futuristic

orientation is the consolidation of experience not simply into habits of action as traditions weighted with the past, but into lessons to be tested in the present as guides for the future. In this sense, insight is the present application of collective past experience, focused, organized, and projected in new ways into critical standards, with new and possibly varying uses.

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## Notes

References to John Dewey are to volumes of the Collected Works. These are divided into The Early Works (up to 1898), The Middle Works (1899-1924), The Later Works (1925 on). They are edited by Jo Ann Boydston and published by the Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville.

1. *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, eds. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-35), V, 358-410.

2. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1890). A useful account of the leading ideas is to be found in James: *Talks to Teachers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958). For James' exposition of pragmatism as a philosophy, see his *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1943). This edition includes several essays from his *The Meaning of Truth* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1909). For a study of James that relates his theory of method to his psychology, see Elizabeth Flower's chapter on James in Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977; Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1979), vol. 2, ch. 11.

3. See James' "The Will to Believe" and "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy and Human Immortality* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956). For a sketch of James' moral theory, see Abraham Edel, "Notes on the Search for a Moral Philosophy in William James in *The Philosophy of William James*, ed. Walter Robert Corti (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1976), pp. 245-60.

4. See John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 1925. (The Later Works, vol. I).

5. John Dewey, The Early Works 5: 96-109. First published in *Psychological Review*, 1896.

6. *Human Nature and Conduct*, 1922. (John Dewey, The Middle Works 14).

7. John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935).

8. For James, in addition to "The Will to Believe", *op. cit.*, see *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911). For Dewey, see *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

9. Dewey's most systematic treatment of moral theory is to be found in Part II of John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics*, revised edition, 1932 (John Dewey, The Later Works 7.) About two-thirds of the first edition (1908) was newly rewritten. Part II is by Dewey. The Introduction to volume 7 (vii-xxxv), by Abraham Edel and Elizabeth Flower compares the 1908 and 1932 editions and traces the way in which the growth of the social sciences and specific historical events influenced the theory in the revised edition.

10. A significant treatment of this structure, which underlies the 1932 *Ethics*, is to be found in an earlier paper Dewey presented before the French Philosophical Society in 1930. (The Later Works 5: 279-88, translated from the French by Jo Ann Boydston.)

11. *Ethics*. John Dewey, The Later Works 7: 164-65.

12. *Human Nature and Conduct*. John Dewey, The Middle Works 14:155-56.



13. "Valuation and Experimental Knowledge," 1922. John Dewey. *The Middle Works* 13: 11-12, note 9.
14. John Dewey, *Theory of Valuation*, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. II, No. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939).
15. John Dewey, "Some Questions about Value", *Journal of Philosophy*, LI (1944), 455.
16. William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism", in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays*.
17. See, for example, *Human Nature and Conduct*, John Dewey, *The Middle Works* 14: 216-27.
18. See, for example, John Dewey, *How We Think*, 1933; *Later Works* 8: Part I. ch. III; Part II, chs. IX-X.



## Chapter II Naturalism, Situation Ethics and Value Theory

Joseph Fletcher

### Introduction

Two things mainly will be offered in this short chapter. One is the opinion that situation ethics, with or without Christian presuppositions, is a significant coalescence of consequential, pragmatic and agapistic morality. The other is a view of the problem of naturalistic ethics and why G.E. Moore's criticism of it was not mistaken but trivial.

### Situationism

We are all familiar with the classification of ethics into three kinds, according to how normative principles are employed in moral judgments. One kind is 'legalistic' or 'rule following', entailing predetermined decisions--at least in the case of some, though not all, of its principles. A second kind is 'impromptu' or 'case-determined', to be seen in the existentialist claim that prefabricated principles and judgments are 'bad faith' (*foi mauvais*). The third is 'situational' or 'contextual' or 'relative' in the sense that actual circumstances rather than generalized norms 'form conscience' and determine what actions ought to be taken. This is the typology I used in *Situation Ethics*.<sup>1</sup>

Situationists cannot find a place for either absolute or universally valid norms or for spontaneous decision-making which is indifferent to generally sound norms. They agree with J. Dewey and J. Tufts that "reflective morality demands observation of particular situations, rather than fixed adherence to *a priori* principles."<sup>2</sup> They do not want a rule of thumb empiricism which too easily becomes a mere moral opportunism, or a doctrinaire moral creed which turns into a moral straitjacket.

Another way to put this is that situation ethics is willing to work with normative principles in an effort to generalize and 'make sense' out of moral experiences, but it rejects any attempt to turn such generalizations into rules. It regards rule ethics, over against act or case ethics, as a form of moral idolatry.

In view of the criticism of this method of making moral decisions, chiefly by religiously oriented speakers and writers, it is important to emphasize and reiterate that situation ethics poses a methodological issue. Theists, naturalists, humanists--the major philosophical camps--do not necessarily disagree with or throw out the formal imperatives and substantive values of those in any 'school' of worldview (*weltanschauung*). On the contrary, they share many or even most of the generalized norms and values commonly perceived.

The issue, I repeat, rises around the question of how normative principles are to be employed in moral judgments. The question is whether norms, as generalizations about desirable conduct, are to be regarded as intrinsically valid and universally obliging. Existential or 'antinomian' ethics, not situationism, repudiates the authenticity of norms.

Pre-normative or meta-ethical issues arise with respect to what we call the 'formal' imperative (do what is right, or seek the good, or, in another mode, we ought to do what is right or to seek the good). Having, so to speak, undertaken to be morally concerned by accepting the formal principle, the question arises for all but the strictest disciples of Moore, "What is meant by 'good' or 'the

good?" Humanists, Marxists, Christians, and others, answer this substantive question by saying that 'good' means meeting human needs as measured by personal and social interests, i.e., human wellbeing.

Next follows the normative question. Normative principles are our attempt to generalize about the operational terms of human conduct. Lying is wrong, stealing is wrong, breaking promises is wrong. These principles having been formulated, then the fourth or final question arises, whether normative principles are to be employed as directives or only as guidelines. It is at this level of ethical analysis that situationism comes into the sharpest play, for it answers that norms are a matter of wisdom but not of fiat. Normative generalizations or principles are regarded in situation ethics as 'proverbs' but not edicts. (All of this should dispel the canard that situationism or 'act-agapism' is unprincipled merely because it relativizes principles at the normative level.)

Since 'circumstances alter cases' situationism holds that in practice what in some times and places we call right is in other times and places wrong. Norms are contingent, have no transcendent status. This is a form of ethical relativism, but it is principled relativism, as antinomianism is not. For example, lying is ordinarily not in the best interest of interpersonal communication and social integrity, but is justifiable nevertheless in certain situations. And as with truth-telling so with chastity, promise-keeping, respect for the possessions of others, and all such norms.

Neophytes in ethics often complain that it is inconsistent to deny that norms are universally or always obliging, regardless of the situation or the consequences, yet to lay down that we ought always to act as lovingly as possible. They fail to appreciate that the relativity lies at the normative level, but that at the substantive level the overarching value, loving concern, is not relativized. Another way to put this might be to say that the overall or prime (cardinal) virtue (value) of love can sometimes be subverted if a moral agent blindly follows an ordinarily or usually pertinent normative principle. Moral norms are only relatively obliging, but love as the substantive 'absolute' gives us the 'fix' to which all actions are relative.

This being said, however, we still have to explain, by what means, in what way, we conceive of and desire goodness, regardless of the various ways we have of reducing it to a normative discipline? It is this meta-ethical question to which the remainder of my discussion will be directed, not to the methodological issues.

## **The Notion of Good**

Ethical discourse throughout this century has had a common compass bearing in Moore's claim (1903) that good is an unanalyzable predicate, not reducible to component properties. Therefore, he contended, since things have to be defined in terms of something other than themselves, good is indefinable. I can find no serious objection to understanding good as formal, predicative (i.e., an adjective, grammatically), not reifiable or susceptible to empirical factoring.

This means, as I have explained at length elsewhere, that within the framework of ethics, whether theological or autonomous, the terms good and love mean the same thing. Love = good. Therefore love, as concern for the wellbeing of persons, and by the same token justice too, is unanalyzable, a predicate and not a property, an adjective, nominal and not real. The writers of the New Testament, for instance, used 'love' when they meant 'good'. As Augustine said later, "*Ethics isordo amoris*".

Many critics have pointed out what a pity it is that Moore used the label 'non-natural' for his conception of good, and that he coined the phrase 'naturalistic fallacy' to denote the error of reifying good. Naturalism is the term we all use to connote an empirical basis for ethics, but

naturalism as such need have no trouble agreeing with Moore that the notion of good is 'simple' and, like the primary color of yellow or the taste of sour, impossible to derive from any antecedent notion. (The real fallacy of naturalists is jumping from 'is' to 'ought', falsely assuming that facts yield values. As we shall see, there is no error of logic if values are posited rather than objectified as a part of empirical reality.)

Furthermore, Moore was curiously contradictory in speaking of good as a 'non-natural property'. On his own reckoning a property is by definition natural, phenomenal, existent, experientiable. In spite of this difficulty, whether we see it as logical or only semantic, I can imagine no strong reason to reject what he was saying. In spite of Hare's criticism, we can accept Moore's view that it is a mistake to locate 'good' in the phenomenal world.<sup>3</sup>

Thus far my remarks have considerable support and should be at least familiar. What I now propose, however, has more bite and originality. I want to insist that the predicative view of good does not exclude nor preclude substantives. As I have pointed out, substantives are values posited.<sup>4</sup> From values we draw norms, operational principles, such as "Parental care is good; therefore we ought to protect and nurture our children." Value terms such as health, relationship, ego satisfaction, goal achievement, mutual aid, aesthetic pleasure, knowledge, and the like, are totally compatible with Moore's non-naturalistic thesis. Indeed, Moore himself actually acknowledged this: "As it happens," he said, "I believe the good to be definable; and yet I still think that good itself is indefinable."<sup>5</sup>

In situation ethics, whether Christian or secular, love-itself is indefinable or intrinsic just as good-itself is. Theologically expressed, this means that good = love = God. (One recalls the emphatic Johannine thesis.) Neither good nor God (linguistically one and the same, as well as conceptually) is empirical, tangible, concrete, analyzable, or reducible. Nor is love. The Greeks spoke of such ideas as *panchrestons*, which explain everything in general but nothing in particular. The thrust is, in any case, that all three terms--good, God, love--signify intrinsicity and adjectivity; they fit Kant's *ding-an-sich*. They are all three unlike all phenomena because they, and they alone, are universals and unrelative; absolute.<sup>6</sup> God is not objective, identifiable, definable; neither are good and love.

God is not a being but being itself. Good is not a value but value itself. And love is the same. To repeat an earlier statement of it, "Love like good itself is axiomatic, ostensive, categorical, like blue or sour or anything else that simply is what it is, a 'primary' not definable in terms of something else."<sup>7</sup>

Since this point is not unimportant we should be quite clear that 'good' or goodness is unanalyzable and therefore indefinable, but goods (in the plural) are analyzable and therefore definable. The same is true of 'value' and values. We must not let ourselves be lured down the road of Plato's idealism, trying to make ideas real. They are nominal, not real. The idea of goodness is only an idea; it is not a property, it is only a predicate.

The idea of value, as an abstraction, corresponds with no actual existent. Only specific values (health, knowledge, fun, wealth, status, improvement)--values in the plural--are definable. Thus also love is indefinable, only a predicate, unless we are referring to specifics or particulars like 'love of country' or 'neighbor-love' or 'love of persons' (*agapé*) or 'love of fame', *et cetera*.

My main point is that, as Toulmin puts it, "to call 'goodness' a 'non-natural property' gets us nowhere."<sup>8</sup> Moore's analysis was as such not mistaken but it was trivial. The category of good--once it is established as indefinable--is meaningless. That is, it must be converted into operational terms, what and how, in order to signify anything. For example, to say "good is better than evil" is

meaningless. All alone and by itself the term good says nothing and does nothing; it does not help us to `do' our ethics.

To be *sui generis* is to be unconditioned and self-sufficient (e.g., God), dependent on no means and therefore, to be blunt about it, meaningless. It was for this reason that Moore was driven to say that `the good' (or good particulars, distinct from `good') is definable. In Christian terms, love is authentic only when it is acted out, made objectively manifest. Therein and thereby lies love's meaningfulness.

The final exposure of Moore's triviality is his own utterance. Debating at the Aristotelian Society in 1922, with A.E. Taylor and H.W.B. Joseph, Moore said, at last, of good, "I think perhaps it is definable: I do not know. But I also think that very likely it is indefinable." We may leave it right there, abandoned in his own inconsequential irresolution. As Ewing remarks, "A person who accepts Moore's view [on `non-natural good'] might as well accept a naturalistic definition of some other sense of `good', for example, instrumentally good."<sup>9</sup>

In this discussion of situation ethics what I have been saying comes down to this: that love is axiomatic; that love as the substantive canon of situation ethics (its what--what the good is) means intending the wellbeing of persons; that its norms or general principles of conduct follow logically from its substantive; and finally that these humanistic or `personistic'<sup>10</sup> norms are ordinarily but not invariably obliging. Experience, the empirical part, plus thoughtful reflection upon it, yield generally sound guidelines for actions intending and instrumenting human wellbeing, in the service of such component values as happiness, growth, health, creativity, maturity, and the like--all being of relative but not absolute or indiscriminate obligation. In a well-known formulation, the spirit comes first, before the letter.

### **Situationism and the Approbative**

Sometimes scholars classify various kinds of ethics according to their theories of the source of the notion of good. This typology often comes in three groups: 1) the rationalistic, 2) the naturalistic, and 3) the approbative (as in Hume's case, or commendatory as in Stevenson's and Hare's cases).

The rationalistic kind, including both theological and secular versions, come, too close to Descartes' *a priori* method of deducing values from a self-evident principle. But good is not self-evident, any more than is love or, for that matter, God. Self-validating or self-sufficient these ideas may be for those who discern and embrace them, but self-evident they certainly are not. At their best they are products of reflective inquiry and considered decision; they are not by any means necessary products of reason and logic.

The naturalistic group, which turns to empirical data for their values, are caught in another fallacy, Hume's famous razor. Ought-propositions cannot be derived from is-propositions. Facts do not yield values, nor do descriptions provide prescriptions. Hare put it succinctly: "No imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premises which does not contain at least one imperative."<sup>11</sup> In this same mode I would add that no value can be properly adduced from premises which do not contain at least one value term. (*Nota bene*: Hume, I think correctly, exposed a logical fallacy, but it was only that. He did not obviate values nor what Kantians call "the sense of oughtness", as we shall see.)

The pressing question is, Whence do we get values, by which we `evaluate' a thing or an action? Not from so-called `natural' sources such as scientific data or descriptive material. But if not, then from whence?

Of these three kinds of ethics the third, the approbative, is the one held in situation ethics. Situation ethics is a case or instance of 'subjective' or attitudinal ethics (*gesinnungsethik*). Love understood in terms such as Christian *agapé* is usually expounded and is basically an attitude, not an emotion or feeling--authentic and pervasive though sentiment is within appropriate limits. With this agapistic fulcrum Christian ethics, like others, is at bottom what Stevenson calls a disposition, an 'attitudinal' approach to good-evil and right-wrong problems.<sup>12</sup> It also fits, for example, the interest theory of R.B. Perry.<sup>13</sup>

Approbative explanations of values and their consequent norms are subjective at least insofar as they do not grant values and norms any objective, given, or transcendent status--as is the case with natural-law or revelation-based ethics. This subjectivity seems to be the requisite nature of any ethics, which, like situationism, relativizes and contextualizes its normative principles. What is too often not perceived is that in situation ethics it is values which are primary or determinative of norms, not the other way around.

### Where All This Takes Us

What now of my proposition that consequentialism and pragmatism coalesce with the situationist's substantive principle--agapism or loving concern? Briefly stated, this coalescence follows from the fact that, once they have substantives and norms, ethical terms such as 'good' and 'the loving thing to do' are supervenient. That is, they turn out to be descriptive as well as evaluative; they entail or carry with them certain characteristics that are definable.

If, as in situation ethics, love means concern for the good of people, then 'the good of people' can be defined in value terms such as respect for persons (and disvalues such as contempt), as well as in the normative terms of obligations or restraints. For their validity, of course, these norms are contingent, since norms in situation ethics are subordinate to values. It is precisely here, of course, that the data of the empirical disciplines, especially anthropology and psychology, is vital to understanding how we can most wisely instrument our values.

Since the situationist's substantive principle is concern for human welfare and wellbeing, with all its consequent value components--that is, since situation ethics is agapistic, the name given it in theological rhetoric--we may validate it in a humanistic way, as John Dewey did with his instrumentalism, or we may add theistic sanctions as some do. But whatever our worldview, humanists, theists, Marxists can share the same agapistic substantive.

Says Dewey, "It is sympathy which saves consideration of consequences from degenerating into mere calculation, by rendering vivid the interests of others and urging us to give them the same weight as those which touch our own honor, purse, and power."<sup>14</sup> The key role of sympathy, whether experienced as sentiment or attitude, is a point made by all sorts of thinkers--Russell, Kropotkin, Leslie Stephens, Bonaventure, Hume, Adam Smith, Kant--very close to the *nachenfelden* or 'empathy' of Max Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey. Sympathy and *agape* are close kin.

Frankena, in another angle of view, once said, "Roughly speaking, where theologians talk about love, philosophers talk about beneficence and general utility."<sup>15</sup> The substantive principle or first-order value of agapism is equivalent; 'general utility' is utility for human beings; 'loving concern' is for human beings too (not things). Dewey's instrumentalism can be added to the coalescence. As a pragmatist, he held that utilitarianism, as in any other person-oriented consequentialist ethics, is the best (the most humane) version of ethical theory.<sup>16</sup>

(Sometimes moral theologians object that we ought to love not only human beings but God too, to which the obvious answer by situationists is the one Luther made, that the only way finite persons can love God (an infinite person) is by loving the human neighbor, even though we might believe that God is nigh us too. That is, again, a very Johannine way for a Christian to look at the problem, and non-Christian situationists fall in with it quite readily.)

The pragmatic test and the standard of 'utility' come to the same thing. Pragmatism's test question, what works or is expedient, and the utilitarian test, what is useful, coalesce. The substantive principle served by both tests is agapistic too; all three require that actions be in the best interest of human beings, and--what is more--the best interests of as many human beings as possible.

Neither pragmatic nor consequential ethics, however, can supply its own criterion or ideal standard (that is, its substantive). Pragmatism can ask whether a course of action 'works' but cannot answer the question, "Works to what end, for the sake of what?" Consequentialism<sup>17</sup> too can ask whether a particular deed or policy results in good or ill but cannot answer the question, "What are good and ill?"

Situationists often say that the question "Does the end justify the means?" is vacuous because nothing but the end in view can justify any means taken. They insist that the real question is "What justifies the end?" How are we to cope with this? How are we to discover what the 'good' is? How do pragmatism and consequentialism and agapism get their common answer, namely, human wellbeing?

I offer this solution. The reason we care at all, the reason we have for being concerned with human interests, is--like belief in God--a decision and commitment, a matter of faith or trust; it is not a conclusion logically reached or reasonable; it is a matter of commitment, not something we are driven to by rational processes.

Elsewhere I have quoted John Hospers: "You can't prove the supreme norm of an ethical system by deducing it from any higher norm, for if you could, then it could not be the supreme norm."<sup>18</sup> So with values. One's summum bonum has to be chosen, selected, decided for. It cannot be proved, *quod erat demonstrandum*. Hare points out that ought-sentences "can only be verified by reference to a standard or set of principles which we have by our own decision accepted and made our own."<sup>19</sup>

On this finite scope of reasoning in ethics I will give the last word to Stephen Toulmin. Looking back on his own pursuit of reason in ethics he found that the reasons for his statements have formed a finite chain. "In every case, a point was reached beyond which it was no longer possible to give reasons of the kind given until then; and eventually there came a stage beyond which it seemed no 'reason' could be given."<sup>20</sup> As an example of such meta-rational questions he cited, "Why ought one to do what is right?" Calling this a 'limiting question' he quoted Wittgenstein, whose answer at that stage of ethical analysis was, "This is a terrible business--just terrible! You can at best stammer when you talk of it."<sup>21</sup>

This 'stammering' is the work of commitment. Theology deals with it in one way, naturalism and humanism in other ways, emotivism in still another, and agnosticism (which in ethics is cynicism) reacts by throwing up its hands in ethical defeat, as Jules Ayer once did. In the end we all find we have to base our ethics on some chosen value as a starting point which cannot be 'proved' in a strictly rational way. We might call it the ethical equivalent of Kierkegaard's 'leap,' although he himself was so mired down in revolt against the dogmatic legalism of his day that he failed to see the parallel of the faith-leap and the ethical leap.



There really is no such thing as a distinctly Christian ethics, but there is a distinctively Christian meta-ethics. Neither the 'what' nor the 'how' of Christian norms is distinctive or peculiar; only its why (religious faith presuppositions) is different. The meta-ethics of most ethical theories, including situationism, religious ethics being excepted, is not metaphysical, as far as I can determine, yet all ethical systems are at bottom meta-cognitive and meta-rational.

Facing the central question of meta-ethics, whether ethical statements or opinions have logical status, cognitivists stubbornly suppose that they are either true or false, but for non-cognitivists they are neither verifiable nor falsifiable. They are only approbative, on a basis of choice and commitment.

## Notes

1. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966.
2. John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), pp. 365-366.
3. Moore, pp. 5-36, and R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 79-93.
4. 'Substantive' may not be a familiar word. A substantive is a word that functions syntactically as a noun or pronominal; it denotes something held to exist for its own sake, as in such substantives as the 'rights' to liberty, property, reputation, self-defense. (Syntactics is a branch of semiotics that deals with the formal relations between words or signs and their significance. Semiotics, in turn, is the broad discipline having to do with syntactics, semantics, and 'pragmatics,' i.e., the *meaning* of signs such as words.)
5. Moore, p. 9.
6. *Situation Ethics*, p. 60 ff.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
8. Stephen Toulmin, *Reason in Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 22.
9. A.C. Ewing, "Naturalistic Ethics," in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. J. Childress and J. Macquarrie (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), p. 416.
10. I use 'personistic' to avoid the heavy burden of metaphysics the technical term 'personalism' carries.
11. *Op. cit.*, p. 28.
12. C.L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), and R.B. Perry, *General Theory of Value* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1926, 1950).
13. Cf. Perry, p. 115.
14. Quoted in *The Theory of the Moral Life*, ed. Arnold Isenberg (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 130. This statement obviously reflects the 'Summary of the Law' in the synoptic gospels.
15. W.K. Frankena, "Love and Principle in Christian Ethics", in *Faith and Philosophy*, ed. Alvin Plantinga (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 207.
16. *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), p. 189.
17. As a category consequentialism was first so named by G.E.M. Anscombe in "Modern Moral Philosophy", *Philosophy* 33 (1958), 10 ff. It is a category of which utilitarianism is one example, but not the only one.
18. *Human Conduct* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), p. 56 (quoted in *Situation Ethics*, p. 49).

19. *Op. cit.*, p. 78.
20. *Op. cit.*, p. 209.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

## Chapter III

# The Character of Moral Reasoning

*Vincent C. Punzo*

The purpose of this essay is twofold. First, I shall argue that the emphasis on self-evident moral principles confuses rather than clarifies the task of moral reasoning, for this emphasis prevents man from seeing what he must do if he is to deal with his moral life in a rational manner. Secondly, I shall try to make a case for the central role of a "dialectical" as distinct from a "deductive" process in moral reasoning. The view that moral reasoning moves from a major premise, "Murder is wrong," and a minor factual premise, "This is murder," to the conclusion, "This act is wrong," is a lifeless expression of such reasoning. In order to understand the nature of the cognitive issue confronting someone caught up in a moral problem, one must move beyond a simple deductive account of moral reasoning.

### **Meta-Ethics and the Establishment of Moral Principles**

The proposition, "Good is to be done, evil avoided," has often been presented as a self-evident proposition. A major difficulty with accepting this proposition as a significant moral principle is that it tells us nothing about the character of that which ought to be done, and that which ought to be avoided. It is an empty tautology which says in effect, "The good, i.e., that which ought to be done, is that which ought to be done, and evil, i.e., that which ought to be avoided, is that which ought to be avoided." Such a tautology in no way provides the aid to moral reflection that one would expect from a significant moral principle.

A possible response to this criticism is that the proposition is not useful as an aid to the discovery of good and evil, but that it shows its utility once an action has been seen to be good, by making us aware of the fact that we ought to perform that action. This utility, however, is not of the type that would give the proposition the status of a significant moral principle, for in any serious moral issue the cognitive problem revolves, not around a choice between that which is good and that which is evil, but involves rather a choice between two goods.

The man who does not know whether it is immoral to have sexual relations with a woman who is not his wife sees himself confronted with two goods, namely, on the one hand, the good of sexual pleasure and whatever other psychological values he foresees in the sexual union with the other woman, and, on the other hand, the good of being faithful to his wife. To tell him that good is to be done, and evil avoided is thus of no value in this situation. What he needs, on a cognitive level, is a perspective that will help him to decide which of the goods may be of a moral character, and which of an immoral character. The proposition under discussion fails to provide this perspective.

If the proposition is interpreted as informing us that we ought to do what is morally good, and avoid what is morally evil, it is a trivial tautology. Interpreted in this way, the proposition may be helpful as a way of explicating the phrases "moral good" and "moral evil" for a person who is beginning to learn the English language, but certainly a proposition that is restricted to such a function ought not be characterized as a moral principle, much less a self-evident moral principle.

It might be argued that the proposition that has been considered is a poor example, and that another proposition such as "Murder is immoral," ought to be taken as an example of a self-evident proposition. Because it seems clear that murder means the immoral taking of another man's life,

the statement, "Murder is morally good," is a blatant contradiction. It would be easy to respond that this claim of self-evidence was a purely verbal issue, for the word "murder" means immoral killing, and anyone who says that murder is good, simply does not understand the language. A person learning English may be said to have a purely verbal problem when he united "murder" with that which is morally good in his conversation. We would inform him that the word "murder" ought not to be used as a way of speaking about that which is morally good, because in our language it is applied to immoral activity.

There is, however, more than a purely verbal matter involved in this issue. To say that murder is immoral is to place certain acts of killing within a moral context, but what I need to know is what sort of killing is to be classified as murder, and therefore as immoral. The acceptance of a proposition as morally self-evident appears to be a way of giving our ignorance the appearance of unquestionable truth. The claim that a proposition is morally self-evident contributes to the failure to realize the need to place the proposition within a specific context or framework.

If the proposition, "Murder is immoral," is to be of any cognitive use to man, it will be necessary to place the kind of killing that the word "murder" encompasses within a context and to show its immorality within that context. The proposition, "Murder is immoral," is of no help unless we know what type of killing is to be described as murder or immoral killing. Such knowledge will require an awareness of the perspective from which one judges the morality or immorality of certain actions.

Insofar as man is born into a society, he finds that society judges certain actions to be moral and others immoral, often from an unspecified perspective. If an individual wants to establish a rational grounding for morality he must try to discover what perspective or frame of reference is at work in customary morality, and submit it to rational analysis and evaluation. The point of such an analysis and evaluation is to try to find what is at the basis of the distinction between morality and immorality. It sets us on the quest for an intellectual framework which is to structure and cognitively ground man's existence as a moral being.

We are now at the heart of my opposition to accepting self-evident moral principles. Such acceptance leads us to lose sight of the importance of achieving a cognitive grasp of the framework or context within which our moral judgments are made. The acceptance of self-evident moral propositions leads us to see man's moral reasoning as a simple stringing together in mechanical fashion of a number of self-validating propositions.

A more accurate account of moral reasoning would force us to look beyond these propositions to the establishment of an intellectual perspective or framework that will furnish the context within which propositions become morally significant. This perspective may be of a utilitarian type, such as the greatest good for the greatest number, or it may be oriented to the advancement of the Communist Party, or to the pleasure of each individual. One cannot hope to mention the various possible moral frameworks men may try to establish. One's working notions of the nature of murder, or of a virtue such as justice, will depend to a great extent on the moral framework within which one pursues his moral reflections.

Because the emphasis on self-evident moral principles hides the central significance of the moral framework in moral reasoning, it would seem to me that ethicists ought to give up the search for self-evident moral principles. It may be argued that if one does not argue for self-evident moral principles, he would face insurmountable difficulties in trying to evaluate the various possible ethical frameworks, or to establish one's own. One would appear to be restricted to two alternatives in trying to decide whether any perspective is the "true" perspective which ought to constitute the moral framework within which man ought to conduct his moral reasoning. Either a certain

framework is self-evidently moral, or, what amounts to the same thing for our purposes, is based on a self-evident moral truth, or the choice of a framework is ultimately a matter of arbitrary taste. In short, this position states that if one does not accept certain moral principles as self-evident, he makes ethics a wholly arbitrary affair.

There is no need to narrow our alternatives in this way. A man's ethical universe of discourse may be rationally grounded in reason's grasp of man's situation in the world. Between arbitrariness and self-evidence there is the possibility of an ethical framework being constructed out of reason's reflective grasp of man in the world. The evidence for the framework will not be such that its denial is self-contradictory, but will involve an argumentation to show that the ethical framework being defended is most in keeping with man's existential situation, and that it has adequately taken into account all that is ethically significant in this situation. For example, the utilitarian must show that the construction of an ethical framework on the central significance of consequences to moral reasoning is in keeping with reason's reflective grasp of the significant features of man's situation in the world. If he is successful, he will not have provided us with a proposition whose opposite is self-contradictory, but he will have shown the reasonableness of this framework, granted what he finds to be the human existential condition.

The reason for trying to base man's ethical framework in a reflective grasp of man's situation in the world is that morality concerns the way in which man is to act in the world. Because his moral existence is in the world, man's reason must look to this situation in the world in order to find the material out of which it will structure the context within which he will carry on his moral reflections.

This emphasis on a reflective return to man's existential situation may seem to involve an identification between the world of fact or the situation in the world, and the world of morality or what ought to be. Far from being decided by the emphasis on a reflective return, this is one of the issues that must be decided by this return. If such reflection sees man as existing in a world that is closed or given once and for all, then perhaps man can only repeat the factual order. If, however, man is discovered to be living in an open world whose character is to some extent determined by his activity, then the question of whether one ought to simply repeat what he finds will become more complex.

Another issue that must be considered in the course of a reflective analysis of man's situation in the world is whether man's basic transactions with the world are purely cognitive affairs in which the world confronts man simply as an object of knowledge. If this were the case, a reflective analysis of these transactions could reach factual conclusions only. Such a state of affairs would also mean that no statement of value could validly arise out of the reflective process.

In facing this issue, we must avoid becoming so entranced by man's scientific achievements in an area such as physics, that we reduce the rich variety and complexity of his existential situation to an experience that is directly involved in the work of the physicist. Man's basic transactions with the world are value-charged; they are full of frustrations and fulfillments. We experience the frustrations of hunger and the fulfillments of food, the agony of losing a loved one and the joys of reunion, the frustrations of failing in one task and the fulfillment of successfully completing another. This dimension of man's existence in the world must be emphasized because a totally valueless world would not yield an ethical framework for reflective analysis. Granted a value-charged world, however, it is possible for reason to work in this world and to come to the conclusion that this general perspective rather than that offers man the best promise of distinguishing between those values that are moral and those that are immoral. In turn, this distinction involves the realization that certain goods are good within a limited context, but lose

much of their value when seen in the light of a more comprehensive and/or profound grasp of the human condition in the world.

Undoubtedly, there are other issues which man must face in his attempt to establish an ethical framework. Hopefully, however, the two which I have mentioned will give some substance to the types of problems that will be involved in such an attempt.

Up to this point, the outcome of the discussion is that the issue of discovering the general principles that are to function in moral reasoning is a much more complicated affair than the question of whether these principles are self-evident would lead one to believe. If principles are to have any utility in the process of moral reasoning, they cannot be treated as bearing the marks of their truth wholly within themselves. It is necessary to try to establish a rational ethical framework and to be able to see such principles as, "Lying is immoral," or "Justice ought to be done," within the context of this framework. If one can reflectively ground an ethical framework in the existential matrix of man-in-the-world, he will be able to substantiate his moral principles, not by appealing to the logical connections between subject and predicate, but by placing them within the context that has been established by man's reflective scrutiny of his existential situation. The contextual view of moral principles presented in this section may not give one the sense of security, of clarity and precision present in an ethics grounded upon self-evident moral principles, but it has the advantage of providing a sense of the continuing and unfinished character of the ethical enterprise, i.e., of the attempt to achieve cognitive control of the complexities and obscurities of man's moral life.

### **The Existential Matrix of Moral Reasoning**

The preceding section may be understood as trying to make a case for the importance of "meta-ethics" in the establishment of moral principles. We must look beyond given moral principles to the existential matrix of human life in the world to discover the material which reason may use to construct a basic ethical framework. Having reflected upon basic features of an ethical frame, we may move now to the properly ethical level of moral reflection which is concerned directly with the rational grounding of moral principles. Working on this level, reason attempts to explicate the character of virtues such as justice, and of vices such as injustice or intemperance. This is also the level on which one tries to establish a general rational perspective with regard to such issues as abortion, capital punishment, and war.

At this point we undertake a "dialectical," rather than a "deductive", process of moral reasoning. An example may help to clarify the character of this distinction. The word "justice" usually carries the meaning of a morally proper ordering of the relations among men. Having established a moral framework, the ethicist must try to provide general criteria that will serve to specify the character of justice within such a framework. During this attempt he will treat the accepted framework as a working hypothesis. This implies that what is open to question is not only the character of justice but the ethical framework itself, inasmuch as it is possible that a serious shortcoming may be discovered in the framework as we reflect on the question of justice.

This openness of the framework to possible change must be retained because the framework functions at every level of moral reasoning. It is always possible that as we try to use it in exploring the morality of such issues as abortion or war, we will come to the realization that a dimension of man's situation in the world had been overlooked or misinterpreted in our meta-ethical reflections. Such a realization may require a slight or a more radical alteration of the framework, if not a total rethinking of the previous set of meta-ethical conclusions. Referring to this process as a "dialectic"

emphasizes that the relationship between the ethical framework and moral principles is not a linear one in which the movement of reason is from the framework to the principles. Instead, in the process of reasoning the ethical framework sheds light on the concept of justice, and on the formation of a principle of justice, with the latter reciprocating by illuminating the character of the framework.

In this light, the relationship between the ethical framework and issues such as the nature of justice or murder within that framework, or the morality of such activities as war and capital punishment, is analogous to the relationship between hypotheses and experiments in the sciences. The ethical framework is used to establish a notion of justice that will help man distinguish between just and unjust behavior, just as a general scientific hypothesis is used to help him deal with certain concrete facts of nature in a more efficient manner. Just as in the latter case, putting the hypothesis to work may uncover something that leads to questioning the hypothesis, so also in moral reasoning we may come upon a factor that leads to a re-examination of our framework.

Thomas S. Kuhn has done an excellent job of describing the character of this interplay as it occurs in the sciences in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Using the word "paradigm" in a manner similar to the use of the phrase "ethical framework" in this essay, he points out that such paradigms play a determining role in what the scientific community at any given time may consider to be the proper methods, problems, and standards of successful investigation in the scientific enterprise.<sup>1</sup> Although he sees such paradigms as important to the continued progress of the sciences, he also points out that their uncritical and unreflective acceptance by many scientists has led to mistaken opposition of the use of other paradigms that have proved themselves to be scientifically more fruitful than those previously established.<sup>2</sup>

As in science, so also in moral reasoning, man needs some sort of framework, context, or paradigm, if he is to deal with problems in an orderly and systematic fashion. However, whereas science may be able to make great strides in predicting and controlling natural phenomena because the majority of working scientists are willing to accept in a rather uncritical way the dominant scientific paradigm of their own day, and conduct their research within the context of this paradigm, the ethicist must be critically and reflectively aware of the way in which his ethical framework determines his ethical principles. It is difficult to present the reasons for this difference between the scientific and ethical enterprises. However, one major factor in this difference certainly must be the fact that science is concerned with predicting and controlling natural phenomena, whereas ethics is concerned with how man ought to act, and the rational justification for saying that man ought to act in this way rather than that. It is directed to helping man come to an orderly, coherent, and systematic rational awareness of himself as a moral being.

Professional philosophers in the United States have been very much aware of the importance of the meta-ethical task of critically reflecting on various possible ethical frameworks. However, the discussion of ethical issues in the philosophical community has suffered, because philosophers have failed to move seriously and systematically from the level of discussing competing ethical frameworks to such issues as the morality of war, capital punishment, and socialism or capitalism. Not only has this failure meant that society at large has been deprived of what the ethicist could add to the dialogue concerning moral issues, it has also involved a loss for the philosophical community itself. A more thorough and systematic exploration of the type of issues mentioned will introduce the benefits of a type of experimental inquiry into the exchange among ethicists. For example, an exploration of the way in which utilitarian and deontological frameworks deal with the issue of the morality of capitalism and/or socialism would add substance to these frameworks and might aid in weighing their adequacy for ethics.

## Practical Wisdom

Up to this point, the discussion has been concerned with moral reasoning seen on the meta-ethical and ethical level. Another level that ought to be considered is that of practical wisdom. The man of practical wisdom knows the concrete line of action he ought to pursue at this time, in this place, under these circumstances, and who is able to carry out that action. Here again, the reasoning is not simply a deductive movement from principles to the conclusion, "I ought to do  $x$ ", but involves the same sort of dialectical character described above.

On the level of practical wisdom, the issues are immensely more difficult for human reason to handle than those on either the meta-ethical or ethical level. The man of practical wisdom is confronted with all the complexities, contingencies, and nuances of a concrete, existential situation. On the levels of meta-ethics and ethics, human reason finds a congenial environment, that is, a conceptual environment involving abstract or general issues. When it moves to the concrete and existential order, reason is pushed to the very limits of its capabilities. Hence, in the last analysis, man cannot always depend on his reason alone for the actual resolution of his concrete moral issues. Often he must bring the full resources of his character to bear on these issues. This implies that he must depend on his appetitive as well as his cognitive responses to the given situation. Undoubtedly there is much truth in the view that in the crucial moment of moral decision the man of character or "good moral instincts" is more likely to hit upon the morally proper line of conduct than is the ethicist who has studied ethics for years, but whose character is the result of one immoral escapade after another.

One need not have great powers of imagination to picture a situation in which an individual may find that after examining as many sides of the issue, and as deeply as possible, he is unable to present a rationally decisive argument to justify the decision that he ought to pursue this alternative and avoid that. Granted a good intention on such an individual's part, whatever he decides to do will be morally proper for him. However, to admit that there may be times when one finds himself in situations that are beyond his rational capacities to comprehend, does not necessarily imply that reason with its moral principles is absolutely useless and irrelevant to man's concrete moral decisions. Such a conclusion is no more justifiable than the conclusion that the scientific enterprise ought to be surrendered because there are certain features of nature that appear to fall outside the present capabilities of science.

Having become aware of the pit-falls of an imperialism of reason, let us not succumb to an imperialism of the emotions. The proper remedy to the imperialism of human reason is not a retreat to an amorphous notion of love, that tries to hide one's inability to deal rationally with the complexities and nuances of human existence. One can sympathize with such a retreat, but must at the same time point out that without reason commitment can easily degenerate into a blind fanaticism or a bumbling and morally ineffective sentimentalism. The alternative is to accept the challenge offered by life's complexities to reflect upon our ethical framework and upon the principles developed within that framework. In this manner it should be possible to fashion a systematic and unified moral perspective providing principles that will prove useful for rationally illuminating the scope and limits of man's responsibilities and obligations in the existential order.

An example of the type of reflection that is needed may be helpful in clarifying my point. At times it seems obvious that we should act contrary to what would appear to the moral principles found in almost every ethical framework. For example, lying is forbidden in most, if not all, ethical frameworks. However, it would appear that we ought certainly to lie to a potential killer in order to save the life of his intended victim. A person working out of a utilitarian framework would not



have much difficulty with such a situation because his framework is flexible enough to look beyond the given activity (in this case, telling a falsehood to one who wants to murder), to the consequences (in this case, saving the life of an innocent human being). The utilitarian perspective views all moral principles as "summary rules", that is, as rules that one ought to follow in most cases, because they usually lead to good consequences. Seen from this perspective, the moral principles developed by human reason do not comprehend anything of intrinsic moral value.

This is not the place to undertake a critical comparison between the utilitarian and deontological frameworks. However, I shall try to show that another way of reasoning is possible for dealing with those situations in life in which it appears that we ought to act directly contrary to moral principles. Admitting the possibility that such a situation will bring out the need for a radical change in one's ethical framework, I shall try to point to a way in which such a situation may lead to a development but not the rejection of such a framework.

Are we to say that there are times when we ought to steal? For example, ought one to take something from another person who has more than enough for his subsistence without his permission in order to give it to a person dying from starvation? Certainly, one is able to dramatize his position by saying, with an eye to such a situation, that stealing is at times morally justified. However, it seems to me that such talk serves only to obfuscate man's moral situation. To say that stealing is sometimes morally permissible is to say that it is sometimes moral to perform an immoral act, for, whatever the word 'stealing' may mean, it is clear that in our language it carries with it the notion of something immoral.

A route that would be more profitable inasmuch as it might serve to clarify man's moral situation, would be to ask what one means by 'lying' and 'stealing' as words which carry a connotation of immorality. For example, does lying simply mean telling falsehoods? Whatever meaning 'lying' as a description of immoral behavior may have, obviously it must be more complex than this. I may tell a falsehood unintentionally while thinking I was speaking the truth, or I may be playing a game in which contestants are expected to mislead one another.

Turning to the specific problem at issue, are we to say that a falsehood told to a man who intends to use the truth to kill another is an immoral action? It seems to me that the telling of a falsehood to such a person ought not be characterized as a lie on the grounds that an ethical framework ought not commit one to cooperating directly in the immorality of another person. One would be cooperating with the man committed to murder by telling him where his intended victim is to be found. In such a situation one must ask himself whether his ethical framework demands that he knowingly make himself an accessory before the fact in the act of murder. One must ask whether the falsehood he is considering telling the potential murderer should be characterized as lying within his ethical framework in view of the fact that the very act of telling the truth in this situation places him in the position of helping a man commit murder.

Such re-thinking may well indicate that we may have been working with an excessively narrow or a simplistic conception of lying if we understood it to involve only the intentional telling of falsehoods. Moreover, it will serve to call attention to the need to develop an integrated ethical framework. What sort of order are we to establish between, for example, not telling deliberate falsehoods and not cooperating with a murderer? The world in which we live forces us to confront such issues because existential problems do not present themselves in neatly isolated and self-contained packages. If one's ethical framework is simply a catalogue of self-enclosed propositions, as I believe it tends to be in a position that accepts self-evident moral principles, it will not be of much use in helping the man who must make a moral decision in a complex existential situation. Hence, many today seem to consider moral principles to be of little if any practical value to man

in his moral deliberations precisely because they see them as a mere string of propositions with no central unifying perspective.

This paper has tried to indicate, in a general way, the central factors that ought to play a role in the process of moral reasoning and the type of interplay among these factors that ought to be engendered in such a process. Its basic thrust has been to emphasize that moral reasoning cannot depend on the so-called self-evidence of certain general moral propositions. Instead, it must be grounded in human reason's reflection upon man's situation in the world. This must include a consideration of the ethical framework developed from meta-ethical reflection, the principles developed within this framework, and the concrete moral situation in which the man of practical wisdom finds himself.

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### **Notes**

1. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 102.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-61, 78-79, 159-72.

## Chapter IV Humanism and Ethics

*Howard L. Parsons*

Throughout history "humanism" has been associated with "atheism", since it arose as a reaction against certain forms of theism that were seen as anti-human. Yet some kinds of humanism do not concentrate on a struggle against deity and indeed there are "religious humanists"; much of modern religion claims to be humanistic. In this essay, however, we shall use the two terms "humanism" and "atheism", in close association, in order to bring out the differences between the humanisms, especially Marxist humanism, and the ethics of Christianity.

"Atheism" in Western societies has had a wide range of meanings.<sup>1</sup> In its negative senses it has meant a belief or doctrine denying the existence of a deity, whether rejecting the use of the term altogether, employing a deviant or mistaken concept of deity, disavowing the supernatural order, or repudiating certain values held by theists. In its positive senses it has been an effort of persons to realize and reconstruct values, both outside and inside explicitly religious traditions. Thus atheism or humanism as a whole has sustained a dialectical relation of negation and affirmation toward theism. Where they confront one another, as they necessarily must, humanists and theists are opposed and antagonistic, aiming at the destruction of certain untruths and disvalues in the other side. But they are also united in a dynamic interdependence and interpenetration, for each defines its position and its advance by its effort to make contact with, negate, and transform the other.

If we examine theism and humanism in their historical evolution, it is clear that they did not originate as two isolated or discrete phenomena, but that they emerged together in mutual modification. Thus, they do not represent two absolutely separated entities, but are distinct poles which thus far in human history have required each other.

Accordingly, we shall deal with (1) the relations between the value claims of humanism and of religion, in particular, of Christianity; (2) the origins of the major contemporary humanistic antagonist of Christianity, namely, Marxism; and the historical relations of Marxist ethics to Christian ethics; (3) the philosophical relations of Marxist humanism to Christian ethics; and (4) the implications of these relations for the dialogue between humanists and Christians.

### **The Relations Between the Value Claims of Religion and Humanism**

What is the relevance of the value claims of religion to those of humanism, and, conversely, how can the claims of humanism be related to those of theism? Though on the face of it humanism vs. theism, and naturalism vs. supernaturalism, represent irreconcilable conflicts and mutually incompatible alternatives, historically they have developed in a dialectical relation. As they have opposed, penetrated, and influenced one another, it is important to understand them in this developing relation.

#### *Humanism's Assumption of Christian Values*

For the most part humanists in Western Christian cultures have assumed certain, though not all, values assumed in Christianity; they have defined their positions either by a redefinition and reapplication of certain Christian values or by an absolute repudiation of those values. Many

humanists, for example, have taken "love" to be a basic value, though interpreting it in a variety of ways. For all its opposition to the established Church, the French Revolution, with its ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, was an attempt to transform some of the great professed values of Christian history to a real, secular base.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the Dutch, English, American, and Russian Revolutions were profoundly influenced in positive and negative ways by the history of Christianity in their respective countries.

Humanists have differed in the ways in which they have related themselves to the Christian tradition. Some have wished to acknowledge their ties to religion: "He alone is the true atheist," wrote Feuerbach, "to whom the predicates of the Divine Being, for example, love, wisdom, justice-are nothing; not he to whom merely the subject of these predicates is nothing."<sup>3</sup> Comte wanted to preserve the whole institution of the church stripped of superstition and transformed by the attitude of science. Hegel, the rationalist who was fully opposed to supernaturalism, declared that Reason governs the world; in the spirit of a believer, however, he added that "this Good, this Reason, in its most concrete form, is God."<sup>4</sup> "Man is an object of existence in himself in virtue of the Divine that is in him, that which was designated at the outset as Reason . . . Freedom."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Hegel's whole philosophy was conceived as "translating the language of religion into that of Thought".<sup>6</sup>

A similar attitude may be seen in the young Marx, who at the age of seventeen wrote: "To man, too, the Deity gave a general goal, to improve mankind and himself, but left it up to him to seek the means by which he can attain his goal. . . ."<sup>7</sup> This was an indication of what his mature faith would be. He would consider the improvement of humanity to be a natural goal or "categorical imperative" dependent upon man's courage and intelligence. Religion itself would be regarded as the alienated form of the quest for this goal.

Like Marx, Nietzsche had felt the impact of Christian values, good and bad, in his childhood. As a mature thinker conducting a running dialogue with Christianity, both with and without which he could not live, he exclaimed: "If there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god! Hence there are no gods."<sup>8</sup> This implies that if the divine is to be meaningful it must be concrete and human. Furthermore, since humanity is not fully human, the divine must be in the making and humanity must surpass itself. For Nietzsche, the error and vice of Christianity was that it lazily asserted a transcendent achievement and then left humanity to suffer and decay. He voiced a longing for human fulfillment which gave rise to his indignation against Christianity precisely because it failed to achieve the aim it professed, namely, the divinizing of humanity. To surpass itself, humanity must surpass Christianity, though, as the French Marxist, Roger Garaudy, has pointed out, the very idea itself of self-surpassing is Christian.<sup>9</sup>

Even in men such as de Sade and Baudelaire, who took little time to refute theism but appeared to repudiate the humanistic values of Christianity and cultivate the demonic, there remained the divine ideal. This alone could give definition and point to their efforts to escape it, particularly inasmuch as it seemed to be sought in those same efforts. In his early work Sartre recognized this divine motif in our life; each strives to achieve that perfect and final union of the *pour-soi* and *en-soi* which defines God. However, since in fact we can never do so, life is "a useless passion".<sup>10</sup> It is significant that Sartre's powerful and recurrent nostalgia for our union with others and the objective world led him to a philosophy which now represents the most formidable non-religious challenge to Christianity for the commitment of persons, namely, Marxism. In its comprehensiveness, its orientation of human thought and practice to the future of the world, its militancy, and its call for absolute commitment, Marxism is the most effective and influential form of humanism to appear in history. Its relation to Christianity will be considered in the next section.

## *Empirical and Rational Humanism*

Despite this irrevocable inheritance of dependence on theism, Western humanism for the past 200 years has been not only anti-metaphysical, but anti-ecclesiastical, anti-clerical, anti-hierarchical, and anti-authoritarian; in a word, it has been anti-religious. Taking its principal impetus from the French and English Enlightenment, its spirit has been nominalistic, atomistic, materialistic, pluralistic, utilitarian, and libertarian. As conveyed through the popular literature of pamphlets and tracts, the term "humanism" still suggests a free-thinker wishing to efface every vestige of superstition that supports the idea of the God that is rejected categorically. This line of thought goes back brokenly to the pre-Christian, Democritean atomism of Greco-Roman civilization, which not only opposed the theology of established religion, but put forward an essentially egalitarian, democratic, and humanistic view of man.<sup>11</sup> The present-day perpetuators of this tradition in the West are the positivists and existentialists, who man, respectively, the objective and subjective flanks in the war on Authority.

This humanism is directed against all claims for objective universals, both political and religious. As a method of radical empiricism and a doctrine of radical individualism, it denies all gods as ruling principles and all authorities as principal rulers. It replaces patriarchy by brotherhood, kinship by merit, *a priori* premises and deduction by sense data, experiment, and induction, faith by critical reason, and duty by individual happiness. This spirit of the "modern" mind of the past 400 years has been greatly stimulated by science's "passionate interest in the detailed facts"<sup>12</sup> and by the rise of naturalism in art in the late middle ages.<sup>13</sup> This particularist and empirical spirit frequently has been combined in various ways with a conviction in the ultimate Order or Creator of Nature, as in the early scientists Kepler and Newton, the philosophers St. Thomas and Occam, and especially the Protestant religious thinkers ranging from Luther to Anabaptists and Deists like Jefferson. However, the general drift of modern thought in the West has been anti-supernaturalistic, empirical, individualistic, and humanistic. This is illustrated by the dominant schools of contemporary secular philosophy in the West: realism, positivism, analysis, phenomenology, and existentialism.

Grounded in a strict empiricism, this kind of humanism appears to arise in those periods when the old centers of social power are shifting and the corresponding ruling ideologies are called into question. Not disposed to return to orthodoxy and not yet prepared to create a new ideology for a social order still to be born, intelligent and educated men are thrown back upon the immediate evidence of their senses and upon the impulses of their own bodies. Reality, value, and knowledge are to be found in or by the individual human being considered in contrast to the authoritative God of the past; the rebellion of the Titans against their rulers is repeated. The life of value and divine aspiration and fulfillment are attributed to the individual man who alone is God. Thus, the Greek atomists, in a way similar to the Charvakas in India, pictured a cosmos composed of an infinite number of individual atoms moving unhindered through empty space. In this view, the order of society and of the universe can only be a function of their individual inherent properties. The reasonable person becomes like a god once he or she understands this order. Modern empirical humanism does not always affirm the order; but it does affirm the actual or potential divinity of the individual man.

Western humanistic criticism, however, has been associated with another tradition of thought, namely, that which has stressed descriptive generalization, integrative reason, first principles, universals, ideals, communal and organic forces and values, and duty rather than individual happiness. This tradition, too, has associated with some principle of reason its acknowledgement

of the existence and importance of the divine. From a traditional religious, that is, strictly supernaturalistic, point of view, it has been anti-religious and humanistic, for it leaves no place for faith and identifies the divine with the transcendent principle of reason to which man has access. Some Greek speculative philosophers such as Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics, and some Renaissance and Enlightenment rationalists such as Bruno and Hegel fall into this group. The rich development of natural law philosophy is to be found here, branching out successively in Catholic theology through St. Thomas, in democratic theory through Jefferson, who combined it with Lockean libertarianism, and in Marxism where it was fused with materialism and dialectics. Pope John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* beautifully illustrates how natural law thought provides a matrix for the meeting, communing, and mutual ordering of diverse viewpoints and systems.

### *Humanism's Rejection of Christian Values*

Both the empirical and the rational forms of humanism stand opposed to blind faith and other irrational and super-experiential claims. Both are anti-clerical, though the latter tender-minded humanism is not anti-authority, since it sees ultimate authority as residing in the reason of the universe, history, or man. However, whereas the rationalist humanist takes such social values of the Judaic-Christian tradition as love, compassion, fraternity, and mutual aid to be basic, the empirical humanist tends to subordinate these values in favor of individuality, liberty, and equality of rights and opportunities. Because rationalistic humanism is closer to the Christian tradition than is the empirical type, it can enter into dialogue more easily with theism. For example, as the heir of Hegel, Marxism offers, without God, the authority of social history as mediated through the interpretation of basic texts, a philosophical tradition, and a political party. Empirical humanism offers to the world simply the authority of the autonomous individual without God. This difference indicates not only why social, rational Christians and Marxists can talk as genuine rivals on a ground of common issues, but also why on social issues throughout the world Marxist humanism is strong and individualistic humanism is weak.

One may ask why Billy Graham--the epitome of the personalistic, revivalist spirit of North American Protestant Puritanism--has had such success in his visits to the Soviet Union and other parts of Eastern Europe. His theology is individualistic and non-rational in the extreme. I think one reason for the cordial relation that has grown up between him and Soviet authorities and believers is the overriding concern for peace and human life on both sides. By contrast, the personalistic apocalypticism of President Reagan, Jerry Falwell, and the others of the religious far right is so twisted by anti-communism and unconcern about Armageddon and nuclear holocaust that they refuse dealing with the Soviets in a sensible and cooperative way.

It was Greek rationalism which provided the early intellectual framework and defense of the Christian faith. Before Christ this rationalism had held that there is a principle of universal order in which "we live and move and have our being" and that "we are members one of another". Empirical humanism, dating from Democritus who held the state in high regard and apparently believed in mortal gods appearing in dreams and premonitions,<sup>14</sup> was derived from both physical and human considerations and was directed against the official and popular cults. Epicureanism developed into a humanistic ideal and a way of life. However, being intellectual, sophisticated, and attractive to the individualistic aspirations of the middle-class, it could not compete with Christianity which provided mystical fellowship.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the opposition of empirical humanism to theism has been rooted in its anti-authoritarian and anti-metaphysical attitudes, and in its

individualistic independence and analytical science. Rationalistic humanism, on the other hand, has simply sought something other than the supernatural warrant for the extra-individual.

Modern Western empiricism in its definitive Humean form, following the course of the economic system which gave it birth, has declined into the niceties of scholastic linguistic analysis, irrelevant to the great social issues of the times. Cybernetics and a revised positivism have themselves revealed the key role of non-sensuous factors in our adjustment to the world. Since the crisis in empiricism has reflected the continuing crisis in capitalism, while the latter moves from one crisis to another, one may expect to see individualistic sensate philosophy in the final stages of its dissolution enacted in the meaninglessness of an increasing number of lives.

Just as the major rival to capitalism is socialism and the anti-dehumanizing national liberation movements, the major rivals to sense empiricism are Marxism, which is based in socialism, and, in the Western world, Christianity is situated ambiguously in both capitalist and socialist nations. Though both the empiricism of capitalism and the rationalism of Marxism are non-theistic and opposed to Christian theism, the former is much farther from Christianity in outlook and approach, for true Christianity is neither sensate in its knowledge nor profit-oriented in its values. Christianity has never been unequivocal in its response to capitalism, but the rise of Marxism as a major alternative, which is non-theistic but on the side of commitment and meaning in history, is forcing it now to take a stand. The emerging dialogue between Marxists and Christians is evidence of a sense of rivalry accompanied by a sense of unity. While Marxists oppose capitalism and theism and Christians oppose individualism and atheism, both oppose the collapse of meaning in a history threatened by economic and social disorder and by a nuclear exchange between capitalist and socialist nations which would bring omnicide to our planet. Hence, in the next section we shall look at the relations between Marxist humanism and Christian theism in the field of ethics.

## **Origins of the Marxist Ethics and Its Historical Relations to Christian Ethics**

### *Humanism and Theism in Dialectical Relation*

The dialectical relation between theists and humanists has taken many forms in history. They have been continuously united, opposed, interpenetrating, and mutually transforming. This dialectical relation has not been merely abstract and philosophical. It has reflected the real conflicts of history between the gods of civilization and the totemic spirits of pre-history, between city dwellers and country people ("pagans"--*pagani*--were peasants), between masters and slaves, between literate clergy and illiterate laity, between feudalists and merchants, between capitalists and proletarians, between Western colonialists and "heathen" Africans or Asians. The conflict between theism and humanism has also been associated with more permanent oppositions in persons and human societies: receptivity vs. active dominance, dependence vs. critical detachment, loyalty to the group vs. individual independence, and authority and tradition vs. questioning and innovation.<sup>16</sup>Theism has been associated preponderantly with the first side of these oppositions, since religion has tended to take institutionalized forms and to become affiliated with the dominant structures of society, while atheisms have functioned as subordinate and critical movements in society. Many "theisms", however, which began as dissident minority movements and were initially denounced as "atheism", later modified or even supplanted the reigning "theism", which in turn, came to be considered "atheism". The genocidal God of Samuel<sup>17</sup> and the miracle-working God of Elijah calling for human sacrifice,<sup>18</sup> while ascendant in their own day over unbelievers, appear as false and atheistic in the perspectives of Amos and Jesus. The Yahweh whom Moses

found in Midian and who made a covenant with the Israelites was not the same as the gods of nature whom his people had hitherto worshipped.

In modern times in the West, secularism and science stress an appeal to observable facts and are correlated with a non-religious attitude. Here, humanism has become associated with sensation or experience as the source and referent of knowledge, with the relativity of values, with the material world, and with the power and importance of human beings. Theism, in contrast, emphasizes reason, absolute values, the spiritual and ideal as against the actual world, and the power and importance of God. Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the leading critics of theism in modern times, accentuated human existence against the abstract "essence" of religion. This contrast, dating from the direct attack of 18th century mechanical materialism upon a feudalized theology, oversimplified the relation. Marx was deeply enough steeped in German religious idealism and Hegel's dialectical method to realize that religious behavior and thought, though alienated, spring from a profound need of man to fulfill himself. He reconceived the categories of rational, absolute, spiritual, ideal, possible, essential, which had been exalted one-sidedly by religion, upon a material base and in dialectical relation with the categories of empirical, relative, bodily, material, actual, and existent. Repudiating supernaturalism and idealism, the prevailing forms of religious thought, Marx pursued a humanized naturalism<sup>19</sup> which sought to discover in those forms, as in all forms of human consciousness, what he had found in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, namely, "the self-genesis of man as a process".<sup>20</sup> A search of this type was required by his humanistic method and goal.

Many influences shaped the personality and thought of the young Karl Marx.<sup>21</sup> Here we may mention his Jewish and later Christian parents; his father with his faith in the Enlightenment, the ideals of the French Revolution, and his "pure belief in God"; his Gymnasium teachers who taught him, among other things, Christian doctrine and who were in trouble with the police; his mentor, von Westphalen, a Saint-Simonian utopian socialist who called for a "new Christianity"; and his teacher at the University of Bonn, E. Gans, also a Saint-Simonian.

### *Philosophical Developments Before and Through Kant, and Kant's Influence on Marx*

As a student of philosophy the young Marx was centrally concerned with the problem of humanity's alienation and freedom, which he had inherited indirectly from the Judaic-Christian tradition by way of German idealism. The Jewish prophets, Jesus, the early Church Fathers, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and many others had provided formulations and answers for this problem. The synthesis of St. Thomas did not prevent the development of two divergent tendencies: Duns Scotus' emphasis on individuality and will and Meister Eckhart's mysticism which defined the human soul as potentially God and realizable as God. The first tendency helped to produce empirical science, bourgeois society, Protestant dualism, and humanism; the second tendency promoted rationalism and idealism in philosophy and their alliance with religion. Spinoza intellectualized the mysticism, which had been carried forward by Nicholas of Cusa and Giordano Bruno. However, Leibniz, who could not tolerate Spinoza's deterministic mechanism or the duality of both Spinoza and Descartes, recalled the principle of the identity of part and whole<sup>22</sup> developed by Cusanus and Bruno, and stressed the unity of creatures in continuity of vital and sensitive activity leading up to God.

More like Descartes, Kant (1724-1804) was shaped by the influence of mathematics and the empiricism of the industrially advanced countries. Himself a scientist and a Pietist, Kant was aware of the deficiencies of empiricism, rationalism, and moral-religious feeling when taken alone, as well as of the crisis in thought threatening traditional religious values and concepts. He believed



that the disputes of metaphysicians on the soul, freedom, and God produced in the great masses "materialism, fatalism, atheism, free-thinking, unbelief, fanaticism, and superstition."<sup>23</sup>

The young Kant, imbued with the philosophy of Wolff, a follower of Leibniz, took as axiomatic the primacy of the mind in knowledge and the formative and universal character of the mind. As he developed, however, particularly under the impact of empiricists like Hume, Kant became convinced that the establishment of both science and religion must avoid "dogmatism" and be "critical" in taking into account both rationalism and empiricism, and hence the origins, possibilities, limits, and rights of the human mind. Kant's conclusion was to found the structure of perception and understanding on the innate forms of the mind which, as in Leibniz, are universal and not merely subjective; to reject speculative metaphysics; to affirm a "categorical imperative" for the practical reason; and to argue that ideas like God are "postulates" of the moral will. Kant was thus more eclectic than synthetic. A Protestant in an age of reason and science, he did not move beyond the autonomy of man's will and reason but reinforced that autonomy. Whereas Leibniz, basing himself on the microcosm-macrocosm of medieval mysticism, had tried to hold all individuals in unity with one another and with God, Kant absorbed Leibniz' stress on active reason but remained essentially modern and scientific in outlook, considering religion to be adventitious and God unprovable. From the point of view of a comprehensive system like that of St. Thomas or Leibniz, Kant's philosophy appears cautious and divided. What prevented him from making the great leap forward, as Marx's criticism of Feuerbach indicates, was his incapacity to conquer empiricism--and individuality, subjectivity, alienation--in a creative way. Though the medieval mystics, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, and Fichte had all in their own ways tried to transcend empiricism, their solutions either were static or denied the empirical component of human life.

Kant influenced Marx both directly and, through German idealism, indirectly in the following ways. (1) Because of its autonomy, which Marx accepted, human reason may be alienated in the form of "false consciousness", and from its generic functioning. (2) Since our mind is active and creative, human beings can make their own history. (3) Theological and metaphysical speculation are futile and have no foundation in experience or reason; hence religious thought must be explained by non-rational forces behind the moral will itself. (4) The human being has a generic nature by which he or she is distinguished from a merely empirical being. From such a view Marx constructed his theory of alienation, dehumanization, and "socialized humanity". Rousseau had been a critical influence upon Kant's position in this regard,<sup>24</sup> and Rousseau in turn had translated the Christian view of the fall and redemption into secular terms: "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil."<sup>25</sup> Also, "the general will is always right and tends always to the public advantage".<sup>26</sup> (5) In contrast to some empiricists, Kant believed in progress. Like similar ideas held by his contemporaries, this was a secular variant of the Judaic-Christian idea which stood in opposition to the Greek theories of fate (Moirai), cycles, and degeneration. Marx adopted the idea, and developed his own interpretation.

### *The Influence of Fichte and Hegel on Marx*

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), the most important and immediate heir of Kant, took up his teacher's theme of autonomy. Under the influence of the French Revolution with its "rights of man" and the Romantic Movement of Germany with its affinities to Christian mysticism, Fichte amplified the function of Kant's "practical reason." For Fichte, man's life and experience originate in his ego or will; out of the commitment of the will the person posits an opposite in the world and then fuses the self with that. Through a series of dialectical and self-transcending steps one thereby

ascends to full knowledge of the absolute. Though in his later work Fichte called this process God, in his early work it is clear that the dialectical process is the creative *praxis* of persons who are rational, active, and social. In Fichte humanity and God, humanism and theism were indistinguishably fused.

The influence of Fichte on Marx is evident in Fichte's notions of the self-creative freedom of humanity, of the human being as a practical and social being, of the person's continuous self-transcendence, of the dialectical process of development, and of the revolt against theoretical and social dualisms.

The most powerful intellectual influence on the young Marx during his university years was the thought of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). In his youth Hegel was a theological student at the Protestant seminary at Tübingen. The problem occupying him then and throughout his life was the rationality of Christianity, or the spiritual character of reason: What is the relation of faith to intellect, of humanity to God? The work of Kant and the Enlightenment converged with that of German Romanticism (especially Herder) and Rousseau to produce in Hegel a unique synthesis. Whereas Kant made a Copernican revolution by showing how a person's understanding revolves around its own forms, Hegel's revolution was bolder: it turned everything into history, the divine history of Spirit which culminates in the reason of humanity. Hegel combined the Romantic view that humankind is evolving through history and becoming like God with the view that the whole of history is the work of Reason. Here the unifying concept was *Geist*, which means both Mind and Spirit. The young Hegel's historical studies of Christianity led him, on a Kantian basis, to distinguish the interior moral power of reason from the external forms of religion. "Pure Reason completely free of any limit or restriction whatsoever is the deity himself."<sup>27</sup> In explaining the alienation of Christianity, he contrasted the rigid and "positive" religion of Jewish law with the free religion of the Greeks,<sup>28</sup> and the anti-naturalism and dualism of the Jews with the naturalism and mysticism of the Greeks.<sup>29</sup> Christianity has "fallen" from its ideal unity into the "depravity" of the privatized and fragmented Roman world. God has been objectified and alienated, and human life has been divided between religion and secularity, church and state, and piety and virtue. The overcoming of such estrangement is Jesus' "pantheism of love" and the Kingdom of God.

Hegel's mature philosophy was an elaborate reformulation of this early statement of the problem and its solution. One finds oneself, he argued, in the state of alienation (*Selbst-Entfremdung*) from oneself, others, one's own moral law, and society. Such self-alienation takes the form of "objectification" (*Vergegenständlichung*), in which one's world is precipitated into separate objects that stand over against one and appear as real things. In such a world of alienation and otherness (*Entausserung*) one becomes either master (subject) or slave (object); but in either case one has fallen from the realm of freedom or self-consciousness into the realm of blind necessity or ignorance. As one comes to recognize one's true self in the other, one begins the movement back toward an unalienated and unified self-consciousness (*Aneignung*). This movement of self-reconciliation in the person, via Reason, is nothing more than the activity of *Geist* or God in the world.<sup>30</sup> Though the reworking of the Christian theme of the drama of salvation is apparent in this theodicy, Hegel has substituted human Reason for a personal God, made illusion the Tempter, and replaced moral Sin with intellectual Gullibility.

Was Hegel an atheist? Some orthodox religious leaders suspected so, and some philosophers, especially the Young Hegelians, believed so. Feuerbach took up the attack on Hegel from a materialist viewpoint, arguing that the subjective being of God resolves into the predicates of the human being, that theology is reducible to anthropology. Feuerbach completed the humanizing,

subjectivizing tendency in German thought which had begun with mystics like Eckhart and with Reformers like Münzer and Luther, and ran through Kant, Fichte, and Hegel.

Hegel's philosophy displayed the double irony of starting out as a critique of orthodox religion and society and ending as a justification of them, and of starting out as a philosophy of religion and ending as an implicit atheism. He sought to heal dualisms and to take the Incarnation of his faith seriously, but in so doing he assimilated God to the world-process, and eventually to the Prussian State.

The radical Young Hegelians, among whom were counted Marx and Engels, saw what was the most radical feature of Hegel's philosophy: its emphasis upon change, movement, interconnection, transformation, and development--in a word, upon dialectical process. The one constant and absolute reality is the creative process itself; its contents and the forms of what it creates are transient and relative. The creative process itself, however, is moving toward triumph over its obstructions in history. This was a new version of the dynamic and majestic sovereignty of God, recalling in a materialist and dialectical form the visions of the Old Testament prophets and sages, the Messianic expectations of the early Christians, the yearning of the mystics, and the nostalgic and fugitive fantasies of Christian millennialists. In its romantic exaltation of action, will, freedom, and the organic unity of humankind and history, it belonged with those other visions that inspired men at this time, such as the dream of Rousseau that impelled the plebeian revolutionaries of the Year II in France.<sup>31</sup> In its assurance of a victory in progress which humanity might join, it evoked again the apocalyptic dream that had haunted the imaginations of Christians for almost 2000 years. It set itself against not only the ideology of feudalism but the modern ideology of the ascendent class of rationalists, mechanists, and Newtonian liberals of the bourgeois order. In the hands of the philosophies this liberal vision had helped to undermine French absolutism but, in turn, it became suspect in the eyes of many who saw it as an anti-populist viewpoint. This Romantic suspicion also had its conservative roots, for while the Romantic imagination was allied to the spirit of the Revolution, with its mood of "alienation", it sought to recover its lost harmony in primitive man, in the "folk", and even in the middle ages.<sup>32</sup> For many Romantics the non-alienated unity of man could be recovered only in and through humankind with its history and its goals transcending the individual--what Hegel called the March of God on Earth.

### *The Influence of Feuerbach on Marx, and Marx's Positive and Negative Assessment of Christianity*

Insofar as Marx took over the grand dialectic of Hegel, he was a Romantic. Under the impact of his reading of Feuerbach (1804-1872), however, the young Marx saw that Hegel's dialectic must come down to earth and enter into practice, and that its speculative view of the state did not explain the contradictions in society.<sup>33</sup> Marx attacked Hegel from a Feuerbachian base: the state is derived from people and not vice versa; the "heavenly" political life is alienated from our "species-life"; and religious alienation rests in economic life.<sup>34</sup> He substituted "socialized man"<sup>35</sup> for Hegel's abstract and spiritual Idea and for Feuerbach's individualized corporeal man.

What leads to the alienation of our "species-life"? As Marx developed his answer to this question posed by Hegel and Feuerbach he developed his own philosophy. Religion is an expression of a widespread alienation of men in society, of "private interest . . . property . . . and . . . egoistic persons".<sup>36</sup> Thus the Christian State "is not the genuine realization of the human basis of religion".<sup>37</sup> The theological state has not succeeded in instituting in human, secular form "the human basis of which Christianity is the transcendental expression".<sup>38</sup> Marx's appreciation of "the human basis" of religion appeared later in his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy

of Right" (1843), which states that "religion is the fantastic realization of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality."<sup>39</sup> Here religion is not described as a fantasy or as a phenomenon isolated from man; it is an expression of man, but of alienated man.

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.<sup>40</sup>

Marx's criterion for this criticism is his humanism. Inheriting the notion of self-alienation from German idealism, this humanism sees its roots not in illusion as such but in the material and social condition of human life. Consequently in his critique of religion Marx's main attack is directed against "a condition which needs illusions".<sup>41</sup> In answer to Hegel, Marx insists that religious criticism must not remain in the domain of the Idea and "the other world", but must come down to earth and the suffering of real men, "the halo of which is religion".<sup>42</sup> Criticism must likewise expose all other forms of self-alienation, later described by Marx as the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, and philosophic "superstructures"<sup>43</sup> of class society. All of them are abstractions and distortions of the real human being; all mistake the false human being for the true one. They do not make humanity; rather, humanity makes them as forms of its mythical, illusory, unhappy consciousness. At the same time Marx dialectically recognized in humanity's religion its revolt against its suffering, and humanity and its discontent with false consciousness, that is, with the human "spirit" in a "spiritless situation". Rather than seeing the person as fallen and alienated from the institution and thought of religion, Marx sees religion and the religious person as a fall or alienation from the real person, while humanism is a first but abstract step toward positive communism.<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that because Marx was opposed to theism ultimately because of its anti-humanism, any joining of the argument between Marxist humanism and theism must be joined on the issue of humanism.<sup>45</sup> Could it have been demonstrated, Marx presumably would have accepted a faith humanistic and naturalistic in all respects; however, religion appeared to be identified historically with alienated ideology and a class society. Marx had an appreciation for the humanism of the story of "the carpenter whom the rich men killed" and the religion "that taught us the worship of the child";<sup>46</sup> Engels expressed admiration for the revolutionary character of early Christianity;<sup>47</sup> while Lenin believed that cooperation between Marxists and believers was possible.<sup>48</sup>

Marx's emphasis on the material and social world of practice as the source of our delineation culminated in the notion of the working class as the chief bearer of the new society. Marx probably first learned about the role of labor in human life from the *Phenomenology* of Hegel, who had been influenced by his reading of Adam Smith. The labor theory of value had its roots in the medieval communism of many Christian groups as well as in the Scholastics, and, beyond that, in the Bible.<sup>49</sup> It echoed Christian-Stoic organicism and the Cusanus-Bruno-Leibniz notion of the macrocosm in the microcosm, especially as the revolutionary labor movement mirrored the dialectical movement of the whole universe. But whereas mysticism from Eckhart to Hegel had spoken of the alienated individual as returning home by way of individual, contemplative knowledge, Marx insisted that it must be accomplished by collective political action. That is, it must be carried out by the members of that remnant class in society who are most dehumanized by "radical chains",<sup>50</sup> and hence most likely to pass over the stage of bourgeois society as self-delusive dehumanization and then become genuinely human. Analogously, Eckhart and the other mystics argued that the man who is most empty and ignorant is the most likely to become divine, as Jesus declared that the last shall be first. Thus Hegel's abstract form of alienation, *Entäusserung* (externalization), becomes Marx's *veräussern* (selling). Religious and philosophical accounts of

this alienation (Christian "sin", and Hegel's "appearance") have been, for Marx, only alienated reinforcements of the alienation inherent in the exploitive labor situation of class society. Similarly, Christian and Hegelian notions of the unity of workers yet to be achieved point abstractly to a truth but away from "the real movement"<sup>51</sup> of working people and of communism "to abolish the present state of things" and to create the unity longed for in religion and philosophy.

### *Marx's Transformation of the Values of Christianity*

Marx's and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, with its militant call for the workers of the world to break their chains and build a new world, was the climax of a rich period of German philosophy in its struggle to solve the problem of human alienation and freedom. As we have seen, this problem was inherited from Christianity. Most Christians have taken as an article of faith that human beings have an organic connection with Spirit (Logos). Hegel started here, finding this Logos to be supremely revealed in the self-consciousness of the human being. For Christianity's authoritarian autonomy, however, this was a fatal step; for the young followers of Hegel soon saw that the pre-existent Logos may go and leave only the human being. Spirit is already incarnate and secularized in humanity. On this view, the vehicle of the human spirit, which the young Marx called "species-being" and the mature Marx called "development", is not the Church or any other institution but is potentially everywhere. The working class, organized to bring to pass the de-alienated unity of persons with one another and with nature, becomes the major source of value in history. A social prometheism has replaced a religion of sacrificial submission; human pride has superseded humility.

The promethean insistence on the power of human self-transcendence had been operative in Christianity itself, as had been the notion of creative practice, which was strong in German idealism and was carried to its conclusion in Marx's social praxis. Engels asserted that "the German working-class movement is the inheritor of German classical philosophy".<sup>52</sup> Through that it is also the heir of the humanistic vision in Christianity which laid emphasis upon the mutuality and solidarity of people in actual living relations and upon the value of work as such. Paul enjoined the first Christians: "If any would not work, neither should he eat."<sup>53</sup> Engels approvingly recognized in Christianity "notable points of resemblance with the modern working-class movement": an oppressed people's movement, slaves and poor people expectant of liberation from bondage, and people against whom the persecution of the ruling groups is directed but who struggle victoriously against it.<sup>54</sup> The working people who responded to the humanist vision of Marx, Engels, and Lenin were responding to a vision which was similar to that of early Christianity, but which by and large medieval and modern Christianity, having become a movement of the ruling and privileged classes rather than of the suffering classes, had abandoned.

Though for Marx humanity and its ideas continuously change, he also believed, following Hegel and Feuerbach, that it has an essence (*Wesen*).<sup>55</sup> Some things in the human being remain constant: generic needs, general relations to one's fellow-man and nature, and the laws of development. Such development is intrinsically dialectical, social, and historical, for the human essence is not individual but communal, being "the ensemble of the social relations".<sup>56</sup> Not only human value but also human knowledge<sup>57</sup> are social tasks and achievements. Further, human development is not fixed at a certain limit; it is open-ended, bounded only by species-death. It is this-worldly and not other-worldly--which for Marx and Engels means life-affirming and not life-denying. This concept of the human essence had an affinity to the Christian concept that "we are

members of one another"<sup>58</sup> and that we are creative:<sup>59</sup> together with others we can transcend the present forms of our thoughts, actions, and values toward a new and fulfilled future.

Such values of Christianity have been articulated principally within the Neo-Platonic framework of Greco-Roman civilization, the dualisms of the medieval period, the individualistic and predestinarian theologies of early bourgeois Protestantism, and the ambiguous liberal theologies of the 19th and 20th centuries. Conscious of the material origins of ideologies, Marx and Engels were able to point to the limits of these formulations. At the same time they undertook to express the values of our sociality and creativity, *mutatis mutandis*, in materialistic, economic, and political terms, though demanding drastic changes to realize them. In this way, Marxism absorbed, negated, preserved, and transformed those values of Christianity.

### **The Philosophical Relations of Marxist Humanism to Christian Ethics**

Because Marx's humanism represents a fusion of empirical humanism (from the Enlightenment) and rationalistic humanism (from German idealism), Marxism has taken two different positions toward theism. Following the French materialists and Feuerbach and applying the "sensuous" test, Marx's early criticisms of humanism stress that theism does not meet this principle of verifiability, and hence is involved in a flight from sensuous, material reality. However, the Hegelian critique also appears: because "every historically developed social form [is] in fluid movement . . . and . . . transient",<sup>60</sup> from this "critical and revolutionary" point of view, the idea of God must be a symptom of alienation and the reification of an abstraction in order to secure comfort in "an unspiritual situation". Drawing support from science, Engels affirms that what is real is not a timeless, isolated, fixed, completed, metaphysical reality that is the Deity, but "a process" or world "in constant motion, change, transformation, development."<sup>61</sup> Hence a "system of natural and historical knowledge" that is all-inclusive and final, not to mention supernatural knowledge that claims to pass beyond history, is "a contradiction to the fundamental law of dialectical reasoning".<sup>62</sup> Ultimate reality and value are to be found neither in the depths of individual subjective experience nor in a supernatural God, but in the processes and relations of social history and physical and biological nature.

In its criticisms of theism, Marxism need not simply point to the supersensuous presumptions of theism. In the spirit both of empiricism and of the rationalism developed in Hegel and still further in modern science, it also can call attention to theism's unwarranted transcendence of relativities and to its violation of the best established principle in the modern mind, viz., the relativity of sensuous knowledge. In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx saw that Feuerbach himself by his mechanical materialism had falsely absolutized the sensuous, static object of contemplation. When it is concrete, that activity, "developed by idealism . . . in contradistinction to materialism",<sup>63</sup> defines what is real. Accordingly, either God must be a concrete activity or some aspect of such activity, or He must be a non-entity.<sup>64</sup> Marxism finds no such activity.

Christian theism has also been affected by developments in the modern world and by the modes of understanding that make change and relativity essential to the comprehension of reality. Among Roman Catholics, Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeck have sought to find divinity by way of our existential and interpersonal situation, while a theology of hope and of the future has been developed by Johannes Metz and Leslie Dewart. This latter theology has its counterpart in the work of Protestants like Jürgen Moltmann and Herbert Richardson. These theological innovations in Catholicism have been evoked in large part by the Ecumenical Council, itself the result of the sensitivity of Pope John XXIII to the material and cultural changes throughout the

globe. They have been more dramatic than the changes in Protestant theology, whose existentialist, Kierkegaard, had to wait for the disintegration of bourgeois civilization before his voice was heard. Most Protestant theologians of the present epoch--Bonhoeffer, Bultmann, Tillich, Robinson, Macquarrie--in various ways reflect this existentialist, secular trend. The Catholic Teilhard de Chardin and the Protestant Alfred North Whitehead have made heroic attempts to interpret religious concepts within the framework of an ontology required by a universe of process as portrayed in the sciences.

Such new theologies, while secular and relative in many ways, have also sought to take account of the sacred and the absolute. On the other side, Marxism, with Engels' and Lenin's insistence on naturalistic or materialistic categories, has never given up the categories of the objective and the absolute. The secularizing of Christian theists learned in part from the worldly successes of Marxism, and the emphasis of the Marxists on a natural or secular absolute, bring Christian theism and Marxist humanism together at the level of theory. There they can begin to understand one another, dialogue may become fruitful, and cooperation practicable.

### *The Standard of Ultimate Value: Its Identity, Status and Evidence*

The standard of absolute, ultimate value for the Christian is a transcendent God as revealed in the Jesus Christ of history. Among persons this takes the form of a forgiving and redemptive love exemplified in the fellowship of the faithful. In itself, however, this value is said to be a pattern of personal being independent of such a fellowship and beyond history as its source and end. The status of Jesus Christ is thus both immanent and transcendent, both historical and super-historical. It is known by all those who, through faith from within and grace from without, receive revelation mediated through Scripture and Church tradition. This way of knowing is self-authenticating.<sup>65</sup>

For the Marxist, the standard of ultimate value is a pattern of events immanent in man and in history. Though it neither has a supernatural status nor lies beyond history, it transcends man's present state of development as an order of human fulfillment that is actualized in history past and future, and in history as a whole. This pattern is exemplified by the individual person in relation to other persons and to the non-human world of nature, and by humanity as a species in relation to the world of nature. The concrete possibilities of the pattern of value can never be exhausted, since it is of the nature of historical events to be incomplete. This standard is known by the critical-practical method of dialectic, that is, interaction with other persons and with the world in order to transform them in accordance with the demands of human need.

It is a mistake to say either that Christian theology is wholly transcendental, or that Marxism's theory of value is wholly arbitrary or narrowly humanistic. Some Christian theologies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, have stressed the absolute otherness of God; but such theologies could never consistently take account of the incarnation by which God not only is in history but takes its evils unto himself, suffers, dies, and triumphs over the world's evils. Other Christian theologies, chiefly liberal-Protestant, have stressed the historicity of God, at times reducing Christ to the man, Jesus; but such theologies have made Christianity simply one relative factor alongside many others. Christian orthodoxy, as established in the early Councils, maintained both positions in balance, i.e., the divine transcendence and historicity.

Similarly, there have been both extremely humanistic and extremely materialistic and necessitarian Marxists; the classical writings may be partially quoted in support of both. If not read carefully and comprehensively, the work of Marx could easily give the impression that values are relative only to class or to a given historical stage of development. His over-all position, however,

is that, like facts, values are not only relative and subjective, but also non-relative and objective.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Marx is not always clear on the exact status of these values: are some values unconscious, either in individual person or in society; in history, are there impersonal processes, such as machines and processes of industrial production, which participate in human value processes; in what sense are human values subtended by such historical processes or by processes in nature; and what is the relation to pre-human processes of the first distinctively human values arising out of social production?

Because of his concern with historical studies and political practice, the emphasis of Marx's writings is humanistic and historical. At the same time, he is quite aware of the wider background of nature within which history moves. It is this awareness, developed explicitly in Engels, which has led some to transform Marxism into a transcendentalism of nature, according to which nature or physical laws transcend history and completely determine it. This is an historical deviation from Marx, just as mechanical predestinarianism is an a-spiritual deviation from Christian orthodoxy. In both cases humanism is sacrificed to mechanism, the human to the non-human, the free to the necessary, individual project to totalitarian control, and the unformed to the formed.

Within Christianity the impulse toward such transcendentalism has been associated with a variety of motives, such as the longing for unity in Augustine, a sense of vocation in history in Calvinism, and disapproval of liberal views in Jansenism. Marx believed that only a proper grasp of the objective existence of matter, independent of us and in dialectical motion in both nature and history, can correct the tyrannies of a "false consciousness", false idealism, and false materialism. This objective world with its "laws" is required by Marx for human reality and value.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Christianity has taught that, except for establishing a correct relation to things other than ourselves and transcending our own purposes, if it is left to its own devices, cannot be saved from its own self-destructive tendencies. In both cases, the irony is that in enforcing the transcendental law, people have sometimes generated bloodier tyrannies than the evils they intended to forestall or rectify.

In opposition to the individualistic and mechanistic cosmologies, Christianity and Marxism hold social or organicist views, in that both are philosophies of community or social order. Because of classes and class struggle, in Christian history social order has been interpreted ambiguously both as elitist and as democratic in character. On the other hand, Marxism, as a product of late-feudal and modern revolutions, has been in theory unambiguously democratic, though certain deviations have yielded to the temptation of elitism. In fact, the main reason for Marxism's vehement rejection of religion was precisely its alliance with ruling elites and oppressive social orders, and its suppression of a democratic social order. Although the feudal Roman Catholic Italian Church had to reject both capitalism and Protestantism because together they opposed its economic and ecclesiastical power, like Marxism it was compelled in principle to reject all individualism and sectarianism because, from an organicist viewpoint, freedom and dissent carried to the point of fragmentation are great evils. On this point Christianity and Marxism are agreed. At the same time, should the Church or a socialist society become an instrument of oppression, its prophets must arise to criticize it by its own best standards, and call it back to its historic mission of binding people together in mutual care and labor.

Because Christianity and Marxism also converge in belief in the non-mechanistic, creationist, spiritual attribute of the world and of history, they give priority in their world-views to the domain of values over that of facts. This means that they look ultimately to practice, and not to theory alone, for the resolution of their problems,<sup>68</sup> though for Christianity, unlike Marxism, this priority ultimately originates outside of history and nature. Both Christianity and Marxism see the universe



as a value-universe that is orderly and hence intelligible, in its workings and responsiveness to human creative activity. Human, spiritual history represents the end and significance of natural history. This is finally understandable only by means of spiritual history, though not reducible to its categories. The history of nature displays a tendency toward the history of the human being, who, as the highest expression of value in nature and as "crowned with honor and glory", is endowed, in turn, with "dominion . . . over all the earth"<sup>69</sup> and with a responsibility for what happens upon it.

We are able to understand, control, appreciate, and thus unite with and elevate nature because we are formed of the same dust and ordered according to the same laws, though possessed of the higher law of spiritual freedom. For Marxism the value-standard is the immanent and ultimately intelligible dialectical law of development; for Christianity it is the transcendent will of God, which, though its natural laws can be understood, is ultimately unintelligible and must be accepted on faith. For the Marxist our transcendence is a function of our immanence since spirit comes from and depends upon dialectical matter; whereas for the Christian, spirit has a chronological and logical priority over matter which is purely contingent. Here Marxism has struggled to give our transcendent spirit its proper place, whereas all metaphysical transcendentalism attenuates matter and human history. For both, we must be guided both by a provisional, relative ethics and by a categorical, absolute ethics. However, whereas for Marxism the latter is always progressively revealing itself through the former as we approximate to full knowledge of the absolute,<sup>70</sup> Christian thought has emphasized the discontinuity between natural theology with its ethics, on the one hand, and revealed theology, on the other.

Marxism and Christianity share the view that transcending and determining the individual's present act are one's own past, one's own imagined future as presently operative, other persons and things of one's particular community and human society, and the established world of nature. In the broad sense of the term, these are all social orders, each of which supports the other. Where for Marxism, however, this sociality in its ultimate dialectical character is a final metaphysical fact, for some traditional Christian theologies, at least, the sociality is contingent. The only necessary fact is God who, even as love, is not always thought to need a world outside himself to love.<sup>71</sup> For the Marxist humanist to whom love is mutual care and creation ever being transformed, love is a historical if not a metaphysical necessity. We cannot conceive history without it; more accurately, our own natural history, as the only history we know and that matters, is in its essence the history of loving beings in their struggle to be and to develop their being and to help others to do so.

### *The Relation of the Ultimate Value to the Actual World*

In Christian orthodoxy the ultimate value, or God, remains essentially unchangeable and impassible in relation to the world. In the Incarnation, the Divine became man, not in order to change or improve the divine nature--for that would be impossible--but either to provide a ransom for the Devil who had humanity in his power, or to pay for the infinite satisfaction for humanity's infinite sin against the divine, or to persuade, by sacrificial example, sinful persons to repent of their sins. In short, the divine entered into history to reveal there its perfection to imperfect people and to rescue them from the Fall which defines history. The Fall requires an Incarnation and Redemption, just as history requires a super-historical Creation. The Incarnation occurred because, according to the respective theories, God's supreme power, honor, and goodness had been violated by humanity and demanded vindication. Because God cannot suffer and people have fallen beyond

self-help, the significance and fulfillment of history lie not in history among people, but outside of history in God alone.

These pre-feudal and feudal views of the Atonement reflect the sharp distinction and separation between the lord and his subjects. The more humanistic view, suppressed but never destroyed by hierarchial power and thought, found God in the very depths of men's hearts, the Living Christ and Emmanuel in the midst of history, recurrently suffering, dying, and rising again to transform persons. The mystical, communal, reformative, apocalyptic, and revolutionary movements within Christianity were alive to the Presence of Christ in history, and derived their energy and inspiration from a sense of that Presence. Such movements fed the modern streams of socialist thought and German idealism, which having converged with such other streams as materialism and science issued, in turn, in the dialectical and historical materialism of Marx.

For Christian theology the divine or ultimate value became human in order to display the divine more fully and to draw human beings to it. For Marxism, on the contrary, persons approached the divine, understood as an ultimate value already immanent within them as their human potential, in order to become more fully human and draw the divine unto persons. For the first, one is raised by God into eternity; for the other, humanity evolves by its collective struggle from pre-history into genuine human history. For both, there is a qualitative transformation into a new being and a fulfilled, non-alienated life. Once more, though the difference between Christian transcendence and Marxist immanence is evident, historically the difference is not a simple one. Alongside its emphasis on the impassibility of God, Christian theology has given an important place to the sufferings of Jesus, the historical fellowship of the visible and invisible Church as the body of Christ, and the historical continuity of the Church through its apostolic succession, its army of martyrs, and the communion of the faithful. Practically speaking, the belief in God's impassibility as the eternity of the realm of value did not always arrest activity in history; at times it spurred efforts to improve people and their conditions in history. Though this activity might not add to God's super-abundant goodness, which for the orthodox Christian is finished and perfected, it might win for persons eternal bliss or participation in that goodness.

Similarly, while for the Marxist value is process and hence ever changing, it manifests at the same time a universal, absolute, objective structure embedded in its various manifestations. This structure does not lie beyond history, but is inherent in history to which it provides the directive norm.<sup>72</sup> The process of the material dialectic raises up ideals which both reflect and selectively guide humanity into interactive relations with the world in order to transform these ideals into actualities. Such interactions are themselves dialectical; they modify both man and the world so that values are embodied and new values conceived and actualized. Thus, whereas for the Marxist history is a material process of the realization of value, for the Christian value has already been realized outside of history. For the Marxist, the creating of values by which humanity transcends itself is a function of natural history and is contained in it; for the Christian, this transcendent creating lies beyond the limits of history and nature. Whereas the human ideal for the Marxist is to struggle to contribute to the creative historical process, for the Christian the ideal is to seek and find God in eternity. The Christian stresses our dependence upon and determination by God, while the Marxist calls on us to be independent and self-determinative.

Does this difference irreconcilably divide a religious perspective from a scientific one, and separate theism from humanism; or does it stem from an ancient Platonic-Aristotelian way of conceiving things, as contrasted with the dialectical materialist approach to the world; or is it both? In short, can a religious person hold to dialectical materialism, and can a dialectical materialist be

religious? If the answer is no to both, then the remaining question is where the two can converge in belief and cooperate in practice.

### *The Nature and Destiny of Evil in the World*

In Christian thought evil has been understood as (1) a power or powers resistant to or destructive of God, (2) a power destructive of the order of God's creation, and (3) the absence of good (the view of St. Augustine and others) or of perfection (St. Thomas). Evil finds its expression in the world at large (symbolized by the figure of the Devil) and in the sin and fall of human beings (Genesis 2:4-3:24). In sin the self arrogantly exalts itself above its Creator and His creation, refusing faith in God. But evil is not independent of the world and God. Embedded in the context of God's created order and creativity, it draws its existence and meaning from its relations within this wider domain of good. Evil obstruction and destruction in humankind represent forms of alienation from God, from self, from others, and from non-human nature. Yet such sin and its alienation are not absolute and final. Human idolatry can be transformed if the sinner, in confession and repentance, will give himself or herself to God, who will grant forgiveness and restoration to a right order. God is the redemptive power in the world, at work in Christ and "reconciling the world unto Himself".<sup>73</sup> He is overcoming evil with good.

Marxism's view of evil is kindred to this position, namely, that there is no absolute opposition between the progressive force in history and the reactionary force; in particular societies this is the opposition of the ruled to the ruling class. Some Marxists, like some Christians, have tended to say that evil people and groups in history will be judged, defeated, and cast into the outer darkness of damnation. In general, however, Marxism is neither Manichaeic nor dualistic; it maintains that in the dialectical movements of history opposites are always united, interpenetrate, and transform one another. In this view, evil is transformed (*aufgehoben*) in the Hegelian sense, that is, in the moving order of history brought from a state of alienation to a state of creative contribution so far as possible.

So far as is possible, Marx and Engels argued, socialism should be achieved by peaceful means; each person should become a "midwife" assisting in the birth of the new society. Struggle with resistant forces, though sometimes violent, cannot always be avoided, for violence will sometimes issue from the ruling groups intent on fighting to the death against change. Marx's attitude toward evil is not radically different from Christian teaching according to which temptations will come, "but woe to the man by whom the temptation comes".<sup>74</sup> The sinner ought to cut off violently the offending member; the money changers ought by force to be driven from the temple.<sup>75</sup> In the face of evil Christianity is not passive nor is Marxism terroristic, but both desire to maintain and to humanize the underlying order of society and history.

Our views of the universe and of history, which stretch beyond our limited capacity to perceive and to comprehend, are reflections and extensions of our own experiences. Our inner life, the images that we gather and store, the concatenations and developments of those images in the consciousness and unconsciousness, the construction, destruction, and reconstruction of connections between them, all represent the source of those world-views we present to ourselves and others. As the inner life or formation of personal identity is an introjection of the world, the construction of a picture of the world's identity is a projection of the inner life of man.

The earliest, most formative, and essential relation of ourselves to the world is our relation to another human being. The ideologies of many religions are ways of dealing with this relation in the most primordial terms of the relation of infant to mother and father. Whether the Other be

conceived as bountiful mother, lawgiving father, etc., this relation is conceived in the religions as that of our dependence on the Other. In such a relation each person is seen to be what he or she is, namely a helpless child in need of a face-to-face relation of mutual recognition, confirmation, and creation. In the Judaic-Christian religious tradition, the Fall is the individual's separation from this state of innocent bliss through the intervention of our own autonomous activity. When pride and stubborn self-presumption disrupt the relation of mutuality, the bonds between Self and Other are voluntarily sundered. The consequence is separation, isolation, suffering, and spiritual death--in a word, the lovelessness of hell. The only way for us to be restored to the paradise of love is to acknowledge our dependence on the Other, to confess and repent of our prideful sin, and to commit ourselves once more to that relation "in whom we live and move and have our being."

For the Jews, Jesus, and the early Christians, that relation of Self and Other was always personal: the Divine was defined as a relation whose terms were the Self and Other. The author of the letters of John put this matter succinctly:

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.<sup>76</sup>

In the course of Christian history this ideal was sometimes distorted or displaced by a rigid, punitive morality that cowed people through superstition, cruelty, and fear of eternal punishment in hell. Though with the dissolution of civic life under the Empire, people were thrown back to their fundamental relations in families, villages and, in time, feudal estates, these relations remained brief and transient, forever threatened by famine, disease and war. Self became estranged from Other. Accordingly, God was transformed into that Supremely Distant and Totally Other, who was simultaneously inscrutable and all-powerful and sent both good and evil alike on the world. With the periodic upsurge of mysticism among the solitary monks, he was defined as existing in the depths of the Self. In both cases the divine was always defined as an unknown being apart from persons because persons, being parted from their counterparts, could not know who he was. God remained the unconscious representation of the self's mystery to the self; the divine was the alienated expression of human self-alienation.

With the revival of commerce and urban and civic life in Europe in the 10th and 11th centuries, people's relations to one another commenced to change. Sustained by new food supplies and other necessities for physical existence, the whole institutional structure of secular life began to spread and elaborate itself. The Self rediscovered the Other, and hence itself, in the manifold dimensions of their mutuality: commercial, industrial, political, linguistic, religious, aesthetic, sensuous, and scientific. The "revolutions" of this secular transformation worked themselves out in every sphere of human life. Often they took two forms, though in much historical writing one form has obscured the other. The most successful form, whose development has been responsible for the writing of such history, was the revolution of the Self against the Other. This expressed the new mercantile movement seeking to break free from traditional feudal restrictions. In theology it appears in both human and divine manifestations as a conflict between the insurgent individual or autonomous Self and the Church or totalitarian Other. Hence emerged the preoccupation of philosophers at this time with the problems of the particular and the universal, mysticism and authority, pantheism and classical theism, Manichaeism and God's omnipotence, and the like. After capitalism, and its religion of semi-autonomous Protestantism, had secured a certain autonomy for the Self, these problems were superseded by a more detailed examination of the relation of sin and grace, and of the degree of human freedom alongside that of God's determination of humanity.

The subordinated form of revolution against the totalitarian Other is to be found in the mystical, communal, and apocalyptic sects, commencing with the heretical Cathari and continuing through the recurrent clerical and lay thinkers and movements who demanded and sometimes achieved reform. These groups, gripped by a vision of the early Christian community, wished to return to the pristine fellowship of Self and Other which had infused the life of that archetypical community. They longed to feel Christ as incarnate in people's relations one to another. Although they looked backward for inspiration and remained utopian in their idealism, they were the predecessors of modern secular socialism and the bridge between first-century Christianity and the contemporary world.

Like its antithesis, capitalism, Marxism defiantly asserts Self before the authoritarian Other and proclaims the modern hatred of arbitrary human limitation. At this point the similarity ends, for the capitalistic man still lives under the shadow of his feudal past and feels the vague urgings of conscience to store up merit in self-regarding works. The capitalist ethic is only this harsh and Oedipal conscience made secular and respectable in the name of some human aims; it is a persistent will that makes the Other pure means to Self as end. For the last four centuries the principal problem of Western man has not been the inquisitions and crusades of the Christian Church, but the deprivations and wars inflicted by the capitalistic enterprise on mankind. This enterprise is driven by the need to negate the Other in all forms; it reincorporates in its own behavior the harsh external conscience it negates; it remains arrested at the level of autonomy and initiative, unable either to go back to the basic trust of childhood relations or forward to the matured trust of Self toward Other. The destiny of the capitalistic spirit, consistently pursued, is the despondency and destructiveness of the fascist state. Forever directed against the Enemy, its "collective" spirit is only a facade for the underlying emptiness of its component individuals. For them God the Other, the Enemy, is transformed into God the Self. Like the feudal Other, such a God is doomed to become a Void, for its inability to relate to what lies beyond it reduces it to meaninglessness.

Marx found the answer to this problem neither in that pathological affirmation of Self which fears the absorption of the Self in the Other, nor in that pathological fear of Self which seeks refuge and submission in the Other. Marx's answer was similar to that of the early Christians: Self and Other define and create one another in a developing relation of mutual care and responsibility. The directive of human living is to be found neither in the autonomous Self nor in some Other, whether earthly ruler or heavenly lord, whose nature and purpose are closed to us. It is to be found in the mass of exploited and dispossessed men, who in the particular and universal connections of Self and Other can form a world-wide community of interdependence: "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".<sup>77</sup>In its continuous unfolding such a community would combine the freedom of the Self with the conditioning care of the Other, the Immanence of individual or social achievement with the Transcendence of history, Independence with Interdependence, Individuality with Universality, and Activity with Receptivity.

In this light, Marxism and Christianity converge at the point of affirming the interdependence and mutual creation of Self and Other. When Christianity asserts that God is Love in such a relation, it means both (1) that God is the relation in virtue of which persons achieve a fulfillment that they alone cannot consciously achieve, and (2) that God is the personal being who is the source and end of the relation, and who accordingly must be the Supreme Other toward which our love is directed. For one to love another means implicitly to love that creative, transforming and saving relation which both enables one to love and makes the other lovable. Our personal love for the other person, however good and well-intentioned, is always confined by immature development,

self-concern and defensive operations which must be broken and restructured by a process coming from beyond the powers of thought and will of the most virtuous person.

One of the stumbling blocks in this Christian thought is the association of the word "God" with a substance philosophy, and hence the tendency to conceive deity as fixed in itself and removed from interpersonal relations. Teilhard's process cosmology has begun to overcome this by using the term "divine" as an adjective that qualifies process. Marxism's naturalistic position is that the only personal Others whom we encounter are other persons like ourselves, and that it is a confusion and reification to identify our interpersonal relations with a supernatural or superhuman being. Nevertheless, Marxism implies that as individual persons we can relate to those concrete interpersonal relations of men whose "ensemble" compose the very essence of humanity as a species-being<sup>78</sup> and which are the very creators of history. That is, as individuals, we can either understand and facilitate those creative interpersonal relations or remain blind to them and obstruct them.

In Marxist as in Christian thought, these relations are not entirely of our own doing and thinking; they stand over against us and make and break us. Marxism agrees with Christianity that the true and rightful object of our human devotion is not merely finite, individual persons but the creative, loving relations we are enabled to sustain with them; persons come and go, but this creative relation abides. It is this capacity to enter into such relations that we really cherish in others. Dating from Jesus' own teachings, like that on the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, there has been a humanistic, pragmatic tradition in Christianity. According to this what counts is, not a person's concepts, but one's responses to human need, that is, one's capacity to relate oneself affirmatively to others. This is the last judgment under which all stand, humanist and theist, Marxist and Christian.

### **Implications for the Dialogue Between Humanists and Christians**

Because Marxist and Christian agree on the essential nature of the Self-Other relation, they are already involved in dialogue. But a dialogue presupposes differences within unity, for it would be meaningless between two who are in accord in every respect. The differences between Marxist and Christian are ample enough to furnish vivifying contrast in the context of a basic agreement.

Christians understand the incompleteness, dependence, and receptivity of human nature; accordingly, on the one hand, they value human humility, gratitude, reverence, submission, obedience, and confession, and, on the other hand, forgiveness, nurturance, succor, solace, and compassion. Marxists understand the phases of human fulfillment, independence, and activity; accordingly they value self-reliance, resourcefulness, criticism, struggle, and "revolutionizing practice." Where Christians believe that a person is and remains a child or a finite creature who derives one's being and fulfillment from beyond oneself and history, Marxists hold that the person, while not totally self-sufficient, is in essence the maturing creator of history, and that this in turn is both the place and the goal of his fulfillment. Where Christians understand the threat to the self in its own isolation and solitude, and value both man's need of the other and the gift of the other which fulfills that need, Marxists understand the threat to the self in the absorption or oppression of the other, and value the integrity of the self. Where Christians discern in our fulfillment a grace or power at work beyond our own to generate good in one's individual and collective life, Marxists emphasize the power of the person's own body and intellect to maximize good and minimize evil. Where Christians see our limitations and alienations and tend to stress the tension between the

actual and the ideal, Marxists see our possibilities and stress the conquest of his conditions and limitations.

A creative dialogue would have each participant express candidly, freely, and fully his perspectives, listen sensitively to the perspectives of the other, and differentiate and integrate so far as possible the perspectives thus expressed. The differentiation and integration must occur not only in individual persons, but in their relations one to another. In dialogue people change their perspectives in relation to each other; the very integration of qualities, forms, intentions, etc., which defines their personality is defined by its relation to the perspectives comprising the other. Furthermore, these contents of personality are not inert images entertained by an idle mind, but the very forms of our response to others and to the world; they pertain to the world upon which the personality intends to act. As one is known by one's fruits, the point of dialogue is not only to interpret the world but to change it. Hence, the final situation and test for dialogue between Christians and Marxists must be human society itself, with its problems of war, poverty, political tyranny, racism, and cultural deprivation. The forms and extent of the exploitation of people on our planet are urgent enough to destroy us if we do not co-operate in discussion and action to solve them. They are deep and widespread enough to keep us all, theists and humanists alike, busy and human in our dealings with one another for centuries to come.

Though it has taken different forms, the principle of dialogue is basic to both Christianity and Marxism: the Christian "speaking the truth in love" to friend and foe alike, and the Marxist engaged in the dialectic of critical practice. In the past, these two forms have sometimes seemed diametrically and irreconcilably opposed. The first did not vaunt itself, but was patient and kind, and in suffering took the evils of the world upon itself; the second strove strenuously to change and control the material conditions of the world. However, the present crisis of technology, of nuclear and other genocidal weaponry, and of massive poverty and indebtedness, has brought them closer together. Many Christians living in a secularized world can see the impact of material conditions, while many Marxists recognize the limits and dangers of force in human affairs. Not only has the threat of mutual destruction driven them together; they also share a common faith in the saving value of dialogue between people working in a common cause.

Both Christians and Marxists have also recognized the transforming and revolutionary nature of dialogue and dialectic between persons when it touches them not only in conversation but in action as the final outcome and test of conversation. To interact expressively, sensitively, and creatively with other persons and the world is an act of great faith, for it means that one considers one's own system of ideas and values to be subject to the transformation that might emerge in such interaction, generating new insights and new ways of doing things. It means that the reality of the creative, transforming power working between persons and their world takes priority over what they as individual persons and institutions desire and conceive. It means that, although one cannot foresee how he or she and others will be changed, the relation of mutual trust in their communication and common labor provides them with a bond of security which will enable them to tolerate frustration, conflict, and suffering and to rejoice in new problems and truth. The demand and opportunity of our age is dialogue and common labor at all levels, between as many persons and groups as possible. We must learn either to live in this way or to die; we must learn either to love with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, or to face a physical and spiritual hell.

## Conclusion

The readiness and willingness to enter into dialogue and cooperation are growing on both sides. Recalling the influence of "that extraordinary figure" of Jesus Christ on his political faith and his concentration since youth on "the revolutionary aspects of Christian doctrine and of Christ's thought", Fidel Castro has said:

In my opinion, religion from the political point of view is not in itself an opiate or a miraculous remedy. It can be an opiate or a wonderful cure to the degree that it is used or applied to defend the oppressors and exploiters or the oppressed and exploited--depending on the way in which one approaches the political, social, or material problems of the human being who, apart from theology or religious beliefs, is born into this world and must live in it.

From a strictly political point of view--and I believe that I know something about politics--I even think that one can be Marxist without giving up one's being Christian and can work united with the Marxist Communist to transform the world. The important thing is that, in both cases, they be sincere revolutionaries willing to overcome the exploitation of persons by others and to struggle for the just distribution of social wealth, equality, fraternity, and the dignity of all human beings--that is, to be the bearers of the most advanced political, economic and social consciousness, even though, in the case of the Christians, starting from a religious conception.<sup>79</sup>

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USA) has called on the educated Christian to engage in "seriously studying" Marxism. The Bishops criticize Marxism's atheism, anti-transcendence, the economic interpretation of alienation, an exclusively human eschatology and hope, and the reduction of moral norms to social, revolutionary practice. For all this, they assert:

Still the ideological outlook of the communist movement is not the only factor that determines cooperation on the part of Christians. In some areas of universally human concern collaboration with communist governments or communist parties has become a practical necessity. Due to the socialization which Pope John XXIII recognized as one of the distinctive characteristics of our time, modern life requires the cooperation of all men and women of good will. Citizens of a world united by unrestricted technology and instant communication, yet devoid of an effective international authority, have no choice but to seek common approaches and concerted action in attacking global problems.<sup>80</sup>

As we, the very wide and long procession of people in history, do solve our problems and turn to new creative tasks, we shall know more fully the answers to our present questions about humanity and the divine. The very forms in which we pose the questions are limited by our own perspectives. Love moving into the creative dialectic of practice is the only path by which new positions can be attained and our eyes lifted to new horizons. Mysteries that mislead theory find their ultimate solution, if such can be found at all, in reflective practice:<sup>81</sup> Faith without practice is dead. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived, what is prepared for those who truly practice love,<sup>82</sup> for now we see ourselves and our fulfillment only through a glass darkly, but in the triumphant future we shall see them face to face.

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## Notes

1. These meanings have been explicated in my article, "Atheism and Human Values," in *Religion in Contemporary Thought*, ed., George F. McLean (New York: Alba House, Inc., 1970).
2. On the dependence of the Enlightenment on Christianity, see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), ch. VI, 1.
3. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* translated by George Eliot (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 21.
4. G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, translated by J. Sibree, in *Selections*, ed. J. Loewenberg (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 385.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 363.
7. "Reflections of a Youth on Choosing an Occupation," in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1967), p. 35.
8. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, translated and edited by Walter Kaufman (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), p. 198.
9. "Culture et Religion," *Comprendre*, 26-27, (1964), pp. 85-92.
10. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 615.
11. Gay, *op. cit.* About the same time, though not concerned with nature and cosmology, Gautama Buddha attacked the reigning tyranny of gods and caste with a similar analysis and preached a doctrine of equality.
12. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The I. Macmillan Co., 1926, p. 4.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 23. Capitalism and Protestantism, with all their advances and flaws, were the economic and religious forms in which this particularist ethos worked itself out and its self-contradictions moved toward dissolution. See R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926).
14. Charles M. Bakewell, *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, (New York: Scribner's, 1939) p. 65. B.A.G. Fuller, *A History of Philosophy*, revised edition (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1945), p. 91.
15. Archibald Robertson, *The Origins of Christianity* (New York: International Publishers, 1954), pp. 132-137.
16. For psychological evidence of basic attitudes and values, see Elsa A. Whalley, *Individual Life-Philosophies in Relation to Personality and to Systematic Philosophy: An Experimental Study* (Chicago: Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1955).
17. I Samuel 15: 1-9.
18. I Kings 18: 20-29.
19. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), p. 102.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
21. For a discussion of these influences, see Howard L. Parsons, "The Young Marx and the Young Generation," *Horizons*, No. 26 (Summer, 1968), pp. 17-74.

22. Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), Vol. II, p. 422. I have passed over most of the thinkers (such as Paracelsus, Boehme, Weigel) who figured in the development of German mysticism and shaped German idealism.
23. Immanuel Kant, Preface to the second edition, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (London: Macmillan and Company, 1933).
24. Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau-Kant-Goethe: Two Essays*, translated from the German by James Gutmann, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), pp. 18-25.
25. J. J. Rousseau, *Emile* trans. Barbara Foxley (London: J.M. Deat and Sons, 1911), Book I, page 5.
26. J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book II, Chapter 3 (New York: Hafner, 1949). The translation is anonymous.
27. Hegel, *Life of Jesus*, as quoted by Richard Kroner in the Introduction of Friedrich Hegel, *On Christianity. Early Theological Writings*, Richard Kroner, trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 5.
28. Hegel, *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*, in Hegel, *On Christianity*, p. 5.
29. Hegel, *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate*, in Hegel, *On Christianity*, pp. 182-205 and passim.
30. See especially Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. G. Baillie (New York: Humanities Press, 1966).
31. E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (New York: The New American Library, 1962), p. 346.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
33. "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State: (1843), in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, pp. 151-202.
34. "On the Jewish Question," in *Karl Marx. Early Writings*, translated and edited by T. B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964), pp. 1-31.
35. "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State," p. 174.
36. "On the Jewish Question," p. 26.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 16. Easton and Guddat render *überschwänglicher*, translated here as "transcendental," as "sublime," in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, p. 228.
39. In K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Religion* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n. d.), pp. 41-42.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, translated from the Second German Edition by N.I. Stone (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Co., 1906-1909), pp. 11-12.
44. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 102-103, 114.
45. Pope Paul VI has recognized this in his call for a humanism "open to the values of the spirit and to God who is their source". *Populorum Progressio*, p. 42.
46. E. Marx-Aveling, "Karl Marx (A Few Stray Notes)," in *Reminiscences of Marx and Engels* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), p. 253.
47. Friedrich Engels, "On the History of Early Christianity," in *K. Marx and F. Engels, On Religion*, pp. 316-318.

48. "The Attitude of the Workers' Party Towards Religion," in V.I. Lenin, *Religion* (New York: International Publishers, 1933), p. 17.

49. R. Pascal, "Communism in the Middle Ages and Reformation," in *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, edited by John Lewis, Karl Polanyi, and Donald K. Kitchin (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1935), Chapter V. Gregory Vlastos, "The Ethical Foundations," in *Towards the Christian Revolution*, edited by R.B.Y. Scott and Gregory Vlastos (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1937), Chapter III.

50. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in *On Religion*, p. 56.

51. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, Parts I and III, edited with an Introduction by R. Pascal (New York: International Publishers, 1947), p. 26.

52. *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), p. 91.

53. II Thessalonians 3:10. This verse is quoted in the 1936 Soviet constitution (Article 12) but does not appear in the 1977 constitution.

54. "On the History of Early Christianity," in *On Religion*, p. 316.

55. See especially his early works, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and *The German Ideology*. This view is maintained in his mature work. See, for example, *Capital*, translated from the third German edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling and edited by Frederick Engels (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n. d.), Vol. I, pp. 329, 609. I have concentrated here on the ideas set down by Marx in his early works. The principal foundations and outlines of his humanism remained throughout his life, developed, extended, and systemized in his views on labor, labor-power, use-values, exchange-value, surplus-value, class struggle, and revolution. Marx's humanism is foundational to his political economy and permeates it. For a full exposition of Marx's value theory, see my *Humanism and Marx's Thought* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1971).

56. Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, an Appendix in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*.

57. Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, second edition (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), pp. 120-22.

58. Ephesians IV: 25.

59. "When anyone is united to Christ he is a new creature: his old life is over; a new life has already begun." II Corinthians 5:17 (The New English Bible, alternative translation).

60. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, Afterword to the second German edition, p. 20.

61. Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (New York: International Publishers, 1935), p. 49. See also Lenin's comments on Hegel in his *Philosophical Notebooks. Collected Works*, Vol. XXXVIII (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961).

62. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

63. *Theses on Feuerbach*, I.

64. Some modern thinkers in meeting this demand of modern thought have sought to define God as concrete activity--e.g., A.N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, Henry N. Wieman, and Teilhard de Chardin.

65. I have tried to state the most general pattern of belief that characterizes the vast majority of the branches and denominations within Christendom today. Not all Christians, of course, would accept this formulation. A principal problem for the contemporary mind which is acquainted with science and takes time seriously is whether the categories of traditional metaphysics commonly employed in Christian thought--supernaturalism, the dualism of matter and spirit--are adequate to

serve the demands of integrity in thought and effectiveness in practice. For example, some "naturalistic" theologians, rejecting supernaturalism, conceive of deity as a natural, impersonal, creative process whose transcendence is "functional". See, for example, Henry N. Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946) and Bernard Eugene Meland, *Faith and Culture* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1972).

66. Howard L. Parsons, "Value and Mental Health in the Thought of Marx", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXIV (1964), 355-65.

67. In spite of their humanism, Marx and especially Engels tended to take the 19th century view of laws as non-probabilistic.

68. "Human Nature and the Causes and Cures of War: Can Christians and Marxists Agree and Cooperate?" *Akten des XIV. Internationalen Kongresses fur Philosophie* (Wien: Herder, 1968), Band II, pp. 649-55.

69. Psalms 8: 5-6; Genesis 1:26.

70. V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirico-Criticism* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952), p. 134. Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 122.

71. St. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book I: *God*, translated by Anton G. Pegis (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1955), Chs. XXVIII, XXXVIII, LX, and LXXXI.

72. If the structure is in history, is it not affected by history? In that case wherein does it retain its absolute character? If it is not affected, then how is it different from the Christian supernatural God? In short, does materialism or naturalism require an ultimate order which in some sense is independent of the particular material entities, though it may in another sense be dependent on them?

73. II Corinthians 6:19.

74. Matthew 8:7.

75. Matthew 18:8, 21:12.

76. I John 4:7-8.

77. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, edited by Friedrich Engels, (New York: International Publishers, 1948), p. 31.

78. Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, VI.

79. *Fidel y la Religion. Conversaciones con Frei Betto*. (La Habana, Cuba: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado, 1985), pp. 322, 333. My translation.

80. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Letter on Marxist Communism* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, November 18, 1980), passim, p. 14.

81. *Ibid.*, VIII.

82. James 2:20; I Corinthians 2:9.

**Chapter V**  
**Moral Agreement under a Diversity of Values**  
*Peter Caws*

We ought not to forget, even for a moment--even in our preoccupation with the most abstract intellectual matters but most certainly not in a consideration of the bases of ethical insight--the actual character of the world that surrounds us and of our responsibility towards it. Not that this awareness ought to affect the style of our philosophical deliberations; they have their own exigent standards, which a failure to observe cannot be excused on the grounds of intensity of moral passion. But it may affect our judgment of the relevance of these deliberations, and of the priorities among them, by keeping alive a sense of scandal and urgency along with the habitual tolerance and reflective calm of the professional philosopher.

In the late 1960s, when this paper was first written, the scandal and urgency attached first of all to the involvement of the United States in the war in Vietnam. Since that time both scandal and urgency seem to have retreated. But this means that keeping them alive is more important, rather than less. For the actual character of the world, and the actual condition of many people in it--especially the poor and the inhabitants of the Third World, and the victims of religious and political fundamentalism (whether Christian or Muslim, communist or capitalist)--remain much as they were. They require philosophical attention--no less when insidious than when notorious, though they are more likely to get it in the latter case.

Philosophy too often suffers from the all-or-nothing syndrome, which may also be called the get-it-right-or-let-it-alone syndrome. Modestly disclaiming final truth in matters of politics and morality, it declines to say anything at all about them except by way of distant or guarded commentary. I exaggerate, of course. However, the few philosophers who have come forward with strong statements have declined to do so in their professional capacity, while the debate on what ought to be regarded as a philosophical topic proceeds apace at the acceptable popular level. There the rhetoric of the news commentaries, panel discussions, round tables and the like is full of allusions to guilt, morality, value and purpose, and in particular it seems to be a widespread article of belief that the tide of immorality can only be stemmed by a rediscovery of value. What can be the true values of this society, we are asked, when it is so marked by violence? But the question remains on the rhetorical level apart from some vague references to materialism, which in both its forms--plain and dialectical--is a convenient focus for criticism. This is so in the former case because of our passionate addiction, and in the latter because of our passionate aversion. Nobody really seems to have an answer.

It is against this background that I want to discuss the relationship between morality and values, and in particular to suggest some rather drastic limitations on the direct relevance of values to morality. For collective values (except in a special sense to be explained below), seem to me the most difficult and elusive of philosophical quandaries, and if morality depended on them, we would be in a sad way, while individual values do not obviously have any moral weight whatever. It is true that we have grown accustomed to a system of moral education which internalizes in the individual certain values supposed to be collective, but it is just the breakdown of this system that now confronts us. It turns out to be surprisingly easy to overthrow it since, by the simple act of declining to perform or submit to this process of internalizing, the rebel (heretic, etc.) demonstrates that the value is precisely not collective and weakens to that degree its authority.

I suggest that morality is not subjective at all, but rigorously and demonstrably objective. The same commitment, however, is not implied for values, which again for purposes of the present discussion, may be subjective or objective just so long as they are 'substantive'. I am not quite sure what is intended by that term, but I am more than satisfied with its general tenor. For one of the myths I would be most happy to see done away with is the myth that values have a different, more ethereal kind of existence, than other things in the world. I would claim for them, in fact, the same sort of embodiment as is usually reserved for facts, i.e. an embodiment in objects or actions. I do not wish to abandon the distinction between fact and value, but it comes out as a temporal distinction rather than a substantial one.

How are values and morality respectively dependent on and independent from one another? For purposes of argument, I would like to begin from an extreme position and work back to something that may command better agreement. The working hypothesis I shall adopt is the following: There are no moral imperatives at all, everybody can do exactly as he or she pleases. If under this hypothesis we can still find a use for the concept of value, the exercise of separating value and morality (in order to bring them together again more rationally) will have begun auspiciously. If the hypothesis were true, what would we in fact do? Well, that would depend on what we wanted. The first desideratum then is some analysis of wanting, so that we can see at least the causal machinery of action in this amoral state. The archaic meaning of the term as indicating a lack serves us well here. To want something implies not having it, and attributes to not having it an inferior status, on some scale or other, to having it. It is important to see that these relations of superiority and inferiority (and for the moment I specify them no more exactly) are relativized to a particular scale (a scale of values, perhaps) since in one respect I may want  $x$  more than  $y$ , in another  $y$  more than  $x$ . (This suggests that to ask, as people frequently do, where something or other fits on one's scale of values, is a simpleminded question.) It is not of course necessary to restrict wanting to the negative case of things I don't have; it may be that I have things I want to keep. Here, however, there is a suggestion that my having them has been threatened, or at least that a question has been raised about it.

Wanting to have something, or wanting to keep it, have then an automatic reference to the future to the time at which I might have what I now lack, or at which time what I now have might have survived the threat of being taken away. What kinds of thing, I next ask, might we want? Here the range is almost limitless: from wanting ice-cream cones and fast automobiles, through wanting affection or relief from pain, to wanting a better character or a better world. It is an instructive exercise to make a brief inventory of salient wants, both in the positive and negative cases. What would you (in fact) least like to lose? What would you most like to have? It is also instructive (to pursue my working hypothesis for a moment) to ask how the inventory would be altered if in fact there were no moral constraints on your choice--what you are morally obliged to keep, that in the absence of such restraints you would discard; what in the absence of such restraints you would pursue that you are now morally obliged to leave alone. I say 'altered' because I assume you did not, as a matter of prior practice, operate under my amoral hypothesis, and I assume that for most of us moral principles are not perfectly internalized. If the inventories are identical either you are very lucky, or you have arrived at a state in which your true desires reflect faithfully the prevailing moral law--in which case you are also very lucky.

I make no apology for putting things at this *ad hominem* level; on the contrary, I think that is where a lot of ethical discourse belongs. Just as the confirmation of scientific theory comes down, in the end, to a question of my own perceptions (either directly or as analogues of the perceptions of more active scientific researchers), so the confirmation of ethical theory comes down, in the

end, to a question of my own conations (either directly or as analogues of the conations of more active moral researchers, by which I mean persons practically more saintly, or more sinful, than myself). If you do not know what it's like to want something very badly, or to have some desire or other altered or suppressed by moral considerations, then your moral philosophy is likely to be either wrong or irrelevant. `Likely to be', not `bound to be', since it is always possible for intellect, together with second-hand experience, to compensate for first-hand experience although that hardly ever really works, as the rather Donnish moral theories of the cloistered Oxbridgeans in the early part of this century dismally testify.

To revert to the main argument: All the things we practically want, from lunch to beatitude, can be represented as states of our world (my world being defined as the system comprised of the world and myself, in active relation to one another, which can therefore be more local or more global according to my interests and the nature of the interaction.) According to what principles do we choose these states? This is where values enter the picture, but it turns out to be quite difficult to pin them down unless we are prepared to admit that the states themselves, in the first instance, are the values, and that the principles (if any) are to be abstracted by induction from the states, rather than the states being determined by the principles. We do of course judge independently probable states by reference to value-principles, to see whether we ought to take action to avoid them, for example, but an equally good account of this process could be given in terms of comparison with paradigmatic value-states.

The problem of getting one's desires into line with one's principles of course, arises here, but the point is that it's no good pretending to want what the principles require unless we really do want it. What many people who have trouble with moral principles (for example St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans) quite honestly do, therefore, is to want a state of their world (including their character, and so on) in which they genuinely would want what the principles required, although at the same time they also (and quite consistently) now in fact want things that violate those principles. But it is quite clear that, in this case, the principles cannot by themselves determine the wanted state, since that state precisely incorporates them as *adesideratum*. (If it is a paradigm state, then the way is open for bringing them to bear on other states, but the paradigm state is still prior to them.)

The principles I have been speaking of need not of course be moral principles; indeed under my hypothesis they cannot be, even though I have been envisaging cases in which they might be. They are value principles, and the point I have been trying to drive home is that they are derivative from value states. Value states are by definition future (new states, or old states under preservation), and they are as far as I want to go in the search for values as such. What value objectively means is a desired future state. To have a consistent scheme of values is to have a set of compatible desired states. There will, of course, be more than one value held by any individual at a given time, in fact there will be very many, corresponding to various questions he might be asked: What do you want for lunch? What kind of government would you like to see after November? What would you do if I gave you a million dollars? These are more or less *ad hoc* questions, of course, but there are two fundamental questions which can be used to elicit really basic values in two different but essential categories, namely, first, How would you wish your world ideally to be, in all its details? Second, If your world were as you wished it ideally to be, what would you do then?

Taking these questions seriously is a much more difficult exercise than the inventory of wants I above encouraged you to make. It does seem to me that anyone who wishes to claim rationality in matters of behavior should at least have confronted them squarely, but having ready answers to

them is another matter. The values yielded by these questions operate on different levels or in different contexts, although (given that Utopia never in fact arrives) they are regularly held concomitantly. The former reflects the unsatisfactory nature of the present organization of the world, the latter reflects our tendency, occasionally, to abandon programs for general reform in favor of more immediate gratification. If Utopia did arrive, we would have only the gratification to worry about, but the fact that some people now worry only about gratification does not mean that they ought not to be worrying about general reform.

A moral note is now creeping into the discussion, and I do not intend to keep it out much longer. However, let me conclude the point about the objective (although not necessarily ultimate) meaning of value. Although there might very well be philosophical (or anthropological or psychological or sociological or political or possibly even religious) grounds for going further, for saying, e.g., that we desire the states we do because we are the kinds of beings we are, the great drawback to them is that by the open nature of the disciplines involved, they cannot hope to command universal agreement. And at least the possibility of universal agreement is to be clung to if we are to have any hope of making use of what relation there is between value theory and ethics. For this purpose value is to be considered as active, as making a difference to behavior. My claim is that whatever more remote reasons might be proposed, at least a component of the reason for any genuine action is provided by the state of the world the action seeks to achieve. Every action, even the most insignificant, changes the whole world, and rational action (of which moral action is a special case) changes the world in an intended direction.

If we want to know the operative weight of values in a given action, we need ask no more than what desired state (or what kind of desired state) the action is intended to achieve. Interpreting the answer may not be simple, and supplementary questions may be necessary, since the state immediately intended may be only a way-station in a series of actions directed to a later state. Or the action may be a *pis aller*, the really wanted state being unattainable on external grounds (also internal ones when we allow moral principles); or the rationale for the action may not be clear to the agent. If for example the present situation is wholly intolerable, then any action is better than none. It is unlikely however, in such cases, that any clearer result would be obtained by using a different theory of value, even though people might be heard to say things like "Clumsy and confused as I am, at least I always try to be honest", representing honesty as a value. I have no objection to honesty as a value, so long as it is admitted to be derivative from the value-states of the world consequent on its use as a policy. This is a radically teleological position to which I fully subscribe, but subscription to it is not required. For the purpose at hand all that is needed is agreement that the functional weight of honesty and other values like it is to be looked for in these states. (I may add parenthetically that it takes a really hardened deontologist to avoid the converse of the teleological claim, namely, that if it were shown in some case or other that hideously unacceptable consequences followed from being honest, that would cast some doubt on the wisdom of the policy.)

Let us now take an imaginary census of the inhabitants of our amoral world, and ask them the two key questions I gave above, in search of an agreement--a value held in common--on the basis of which we might be able to make a rational appeal to them to behave in certain ways and in order to lay the groundwork for the construction of a common morality. (If there is to be a common morality, after all, people are going to have to want it; we will be on much stronger ground, then, if we can show them that they want it already, than if we confront them with it and invite them to want it.) Of the two questions I consider, the second--What would you do if everything were as you wished it to be?--the more fundamental as well as, in a way, the more puzzling. It is more



fundamental because it could always be posed, whereas the first would become irrelevant in the (admittedly unlikely) event that Utopia did arrive; more puzzling because surely, if everything were as we wished it to be, there would be nothing left to desire. This last point makes it clear that values of the kind elicited by the second question must be allowed to change with time, otherwise we would all be obliged to greet the arrival of Utopia by committing suicide, or somehow to ensure that it would not arrive. We do not, as things stand at present, really have to worry ourselves about that, but it would be a pity to concede without a struggle the principle that value is merely a function of the imperfection of the world, which would follow if in a perfect world we were at a loss for anything further to do.

One result of our census can safely be predicted, namely that, on the second question, there will be an almost total diversity of opinion. This, of course, is a very satisfactory result, for imagine the chaos if we all wanted the same thing. Fortunately the distribution of genes, upbringings, phobias and the like in the population ensures that tastes and inclinations differ widely, so that at least universal competition is avoided. In a genuine Utopia, of course, even that might be taken care of, since the conditions for doing most things could in principle be replicated enough times to accommodate everybody. But if, as seems wise at least for the time being, we impose on possible Utopias the constraints characteristic of the surface of the earth, then only a few people could be, for example, rulers of entire continents, which would set up a potentially, competitive situation among those with fantasies of imperial grandeur; and, let us say, only one person could be alone at the North Pole. Unfortunately being alone at the North Pole is only too good a paradigm for what a lot of people want, precisely because only one person can do it. The satisfaction that human beings derive from the uniqueness of their accomplishments or possessions makes some competition inevitable, short of an intolerable system of deceptions.

I want now to suggest that morality can best be understood as the system of rules under which this competition is carried on. At first blush this sounds regrettably Hobbesian, but if the rules are properly constructed, they may turn out to have some redeeming features. After suitable reflection on the implications of their joint answer to the second question, rational agents (and I will deal with the irrational in a minute) will be found to incorporate such rules, in one form or another, in their answers to the first. Doing so, in fact, turns out to be a condition for maintaining idiosyncrasy in their answers to the second. For individuals find themselves in a game-theoretical quandary, in which they must either give up some degree of autonomy by agreeing to rules, or run an unacceptable risk of being completely frustrated in their objectives by the non-rule governed behavior of others; and agreeing to the rules turns out in every case to involve the least probable sacrifice. I assert this categorically without overlooking the obvious fact that some people, because of the nature of probability, will be able to get away with violating some of the rules, even flouting them; the point is that they can never know in advance that they are going to get away with it, and that according to the principles of game theory, even trying such a gamble is irrational. This possibility cannot be held specifically against my argument, since no system of morality has ever been devised which was capable of coercing the resolutely immoral (or the incurably irrational) among us.

Some form of moral rule, therefore, becomes a value in common for individuals compelled to live in a world in common. It is to be noted that the rules are not wanted for their own sake, but for the sake of further values (corresponding to my second question) which are not held in common. And the nature of these further values is left completely open, save for the condition we must now impose upon them that they be compatible with the moral rules. The hypothesis of amorality with which I began turns out to be reduced *ad absurdum*--if morality did not exist, we

would have to invent it. It may be remarked that a similar argument could be constructed for legal rules also, that indeed they are, to some extent, the same argument, and that seems to me natural enough: people have dreamed of a society in which morality did the work of law, and had nightmares of a society in which law did the work of morality, thus arguing a kind of continuity between them. The former is at least a consistent idea--anarchy among moral paragons--but the latter reassuringly collapses. It does so practically on the grounds of enforcement, since everyone would require constant surveillance by the police, with nothing being left to personal moral impulses; and also logically because of the problem: *quis custodiet ipsos custodes*. (These theoretical difficulties have not, it is true, prevented certain governments from carrying out some rather unpleasant experiments in this direction.)

On the basis of a definition of 'value' as 'desired state of the world' we have performed the necessary invention of morality, a system subscribed to in common and built on foundations which are in principle idiosyncratic. But what morality?--the rules have not yet been specified. I will content myself with some quite sketchy final remarks on this point. The rules were invoked, it will be remembered, in response to a consideration of what might happen without them to the private aspirations of a lot of free individuals inhabiting the same planet. The general import of the rules can then be derived from a consideration of the various ways in which such aspirations might be frustrated. There seem to be three principal ways in which this might happen: we might be deprived, we might be deceived, or we might be interfered with. The last two are of course the most familiar, and most people can be brought to see that at least the more overt forms of deception and interference are immoral, so that rules prohibiting them (not lying, not stealing, not killing, etc.) are readily accepted. But the first requires special attention in the light of current concerns.

In this connection it is instructive to compare moral rules with the rules of certain well-known games, like Monopoly, in which action requires resources, as in practice does most human action. I do not wish to press the analogy very far, since I am not sure that the finances of the real estate business are the best possible model for my purpose; but one thing is worth attention, namely, that in addition to rules about what may and may not be done, there is a rule specifying an equitable initial distribution of the available resources. But there is no familiar moral rule embodying such an idea, even though it is quite clearly just as important for me to have the resources of material and energy needed for my action as it is to have the information and the freedom from interference. I think there are good historical reasons why this aspect of morality should appear rather late, why in fact it is only now coming to the fore as on an equal footing with the other two. The main reason is that until the industrial revolution, while there were, to be sure, inequalities of property and power, a natural initial distribution of resources--which consisted in each person's having a body, capable by itself or in collaboration with a small number of others of doing most things that anybody or any group could do--ensured a kind of equality of opportunity and kept the range of conditions of existence fairly narrow. The beggar was worse off than the king, but neither of them enjoyed particularly good plumbing. The advent of technology has changed all that, so that the differential between the rich and the poor, between the rich nations and the poor nations, between the educated and the uneducated, has become enormous and glaringly evident.

Given these circumstances, the rule against deprivation has all the objective force of the rules against deception and interference; it arises, as they do, out of the objective conditions. What the situation of the poor and the oppressed (to return to my starting-point) ought to be saying to us is that we have to take good account of this, to enlarge our conception of morality to suit the circumstances. We have not been playing according to the rules, and the others are protesting. This unsportsmanlike conduct was not intentional on our part; it was just that we had not realized it was

a rule, because of our own comparatively privileged circumstances prevented us from seeing its force. Now that it has been brought to our attention, however, we cannot escape the responsibility of obeying it in the future.

Why a moral rule, you may ask? In fact why call all this morality at all? It doesn't have the authority and sanction that so many of us like to associate with morality, having been generated out of the most banal considerations of what ordinary people practically want. What is the warrant for these rules? These three challenges require three answers, and with them I will close. First, the rule against deprivation has to be apprehended as moral before it can become effectively legal, as public opinion about welfare legislation makes plain. It is admittedly much harder in one's own person to make a positive contribution to another person's resources than just to keep out of the way or refrain from telling lies, but genuine moral concern can also express itself politically and there are plenty of opportunities for that. Second, I call all these rules moral because they play just the role that moral rules have always played, namely to guide the action of the individual agent with respect to other individuals and society, and at the same time to protect the agent, to the extent that they are obeyed by others (not that the failure of others to obey them is any excuse for not obeying them oneself). Third, the warrant of the rules is that they work, and can be shown to work. Of course, if they are to work everybody has to obey them, and my claim is to have given a more plausible ground for persuading people to do so, by restricting myself to the minimal conception of value, than can be given for rules resting on altruism, love, human dignity, human nature and so on, even though these might, if universally acted upon, yield a better world still. The trouble with them is that they mean different things to different people, so that as starting-points for argument they are less than satisfactory. All that is needed by the above position to start with is what an individual wants, and that need may mean anything to the individual in question. On that explicitly diverse basis we have a better chance of arguing to agreement.

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## Chapter VI

# The Person, Moral Growth and Character Development

*George F. McLean*

For the last half century, from John Dewey's emphasis upon socialization to the more recent emphasis upon character, education has retained one general goal, namely, not merely to provide information but to develop the integral person. Though the need for content has often required reaffirmation, the time is long passed when schools were considered to be only repositories of knowledge upon which students might draw. The ancient respect and even veneration of one's teacher as one who creatively affected the student's life and personality survives in the conviction that, along with information and even knowledge in its broadest sense, real education and character development must promote the development of the student's powers to examine and evaluate, to create and communicate, to feel and to respond.

Nowhere is this more true, or more specifically intended, than in programs of moral education. Values clarification programs aim at bringing students to a greater consciousness of the values they possess; cognitive-developmental programs are directly concerned with the growth of the student's ability to make moral judgments. Progress in identifying more adequate goals and in enriching the content of such moral education programs depends upon improving our understanding of the nature of moral growth.

This, in turn, requires clarifying both the place of moral growth and character development in the life of the person and the nature of the person as a distinct and responsible agent in the community. Such understanding is not, of course, fabricated upon the moment, but is derived from the long experience of humankind. Hence, we should review our heritages for answers to three crucial questions about the person as the subject of a moral life and of moral education.

(a) Is the person only a set of roles constituted entirely in function of a structure or system in which one plays a particular part? If so, one could not refuse to do whatever the system demanded or tolerated. Or is the person a subject in his or her own right, with their proper dignity, heritage, goals and standards?

(b) Is there merely a stream of consciousness which becomes a person only upon the achievement of a certain level of self-awareness? If so, it becomes difficult to integrate the experiences of early childhood and the emotions of adult life which play so central a role in moral maturity. Or is the person an essentially free and responsible psychophysical subject?

(c) Finally, does a person's freedom consist merely in implementing a pattern of behavior encoded in one's nature. If so, there would be little place for the anguish of decision, the pains of moral growth, or the creativity of a moral life. Or is this free subject a creative center whose basic dynamism consists in realizing a unique inner harmony and outer community for which moral education should contribute both form and content?

To respond to such basic concerns those involved with education must have available the full resources of their heritages. At the same time, because the task of self-creation on the part of the student will reflect one or more of the multiple modes of our contemporary self-understanding, it can be expected that not everyone will subscribe to all the possible dimensions of meaning, nor certainly in the same mode or to the same degree. Hence, one involved in the moral education of others in a pluralistic society must be clear about the potential dimensions of the person: what they

are,<sup>1</sup> how they are rooted in our cultural heritages, how they affect the aims and methods of moral education, and how they can be interrelated in a mutually reinforcing manner toward the development of a more integrated person and a more cohesive society. Indeed, there might be a certain correlation of the above-mentioned questions both with the dimensions of the subject as a distinct-yet-related responsible moral agent and with the progressive development of the person throughout his or her life.

For orientation in this task let us begin by delineating the person by a contrast to a number of other notions. These contrasts will serve subsequently as guideposts for a series of positive and progressively deepening insights regarding the nature of the person, their moral growth, and self-fulfillment.

First and most notably, persons are contrasted to possessions. We object most strongly to any suggestion whether in word, gesture, or deed by which a person is treated as a commodity subject to manipulation or as a mere means by which others attain their goals. This, indeed, has become a litmus test for acceptable behavior.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, persons are considered to be irreducible to the community. Any structures or situation which considers only the whole without taking account of the individual and his concerns is rejected precisely as depersonalizing. Thirdly and conversely, those who are so individualistic as to be insensitive to the concerns of others are themselves considered impersonal. These exclusions direct our search for the meaning of the human person toward a responsible self which is neither reducible to, nor independent of, the physical and human context in which one abides.

This positive notion of the person has not always had an identical or unchanging meaning. By natural growth, more than by mere accretion, the notion has managed to incorporate the great achievements of human self-discovery, for which it has been both the stimulus and the goal. This continuing process has been central to philosophy from its earliest days. Like all life processes, the search for the person has consisted in a sequence of important steps, each of which has resulted in a certain equilibrium or level of culture. In time each has been enriched and molded by subsequent discoveries. Seen over time this search appears to be the very heart of our personal life.

To look into this experience it will be advantageous to study the nature of the person through reflection on a series of paired and progressively deeper dimensions: first, as a role and as the one who lives out this role; second, as free self-consciousness and as the subject of that freedom; and third, as moral agent and as searching for one's moral development and fulfillment. The first member of each pair is integral to an understanding of the human person, moral growth and character development, but it requires also the corresponding member of that pair and evokes the pair on the next and deeper level.

## **Role and Individual**

### *A. Role*

One means for finding the earliest meaning of a particular notion is to study the term by which it is designated. As earliest, this meaning tends to be more manifest and hence to remain current. The major study<sup>3</sup> on the origins of the term 'person' concludes that, of the multiple origins which have been proposed, the most probable refers to the mask used by actors in Greece and subsequently adopted in Rome. Some explain that this was called a '*persona*' because by 'sounding through' (*per-sonando*)<sup>4</sup> its single hole the voice of the wearer was strengthened, concentrated, and made to resound clearly. Others see the term as a transformation of the Greek term for the mask

which symbolized the actor's role.<sup>5</sup> Hence, an original and relatively surface notion of person is the assumption of a character or the carrying out of a role. As such it has little to do with one's self; it is defined rather in terms of the set of relations which constitutes the plot or story-line of a play.

This etymology is tentative; some would document an earlier and more rich sense of person in Homeric literature.<sup>6</sup> There can be no doubt, however, that the term has been used broadly in the above ethical sense of a role played in human actions. Ancient biblical literature described God as not being a respecter of persons, that is, of the roles played by various individuals.<sup>7</sup> The Stoics thought of this in cosmic terms, seeing the wise person either as writing their role or as interpreting a role determined by the Master. In either case, to be a wise person was to be consistent, to play out one's role in harmony with oneself and with reason as the universal law of nature. From this ethical sense of person as role it was but a short step to a similar legal sense. This generally is a distinct and characteristic relation, although, as Cicero noted, it could be multiple: "Three roles do I sustain . . . my own, that of my opponent, that of the judge."<sup>8</sup>

Far from being archaic,<sup>9</sup> the understanding of person as the playing of a role seems typical of much modern and American thought. John Dewey in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* characterized the essence of the modern mentality in just these terms: in the case of ancient or classic usage "we are dealing with something constant in existence, physical or metaphysical; in the other [modern] case, with something constant in function and operation."<sup>10</sup> The social and psychological sciences focus upon these roles or functions and in these terms attempt to construct, through operational definitions, their entire conceptual field.

This undergirds much of the progress in the social and behavioral sciences. As the same individual can play multiple roles, even in the same circumstances, studying the person in terms of roles makes it possible to identify specific dimensions of one's life for more precise investigation and to analyze serially the multiple relations which obtain in an interpersonal situation. William James, for example, distinguishes in this manner the self shown to family from that which one shows to professional colleagues or to God. Further, determining to pursue this exclusively on the basis of data which is subject to empirical verification<sup>11</sup> has made possible an immense collaborative effort to achieve a scientific understanding of human life.

Though much has been accomplished through understanding the person in terms of roles, there may have been a distant early warning of the limitations of this approach in Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) *Cours de philosophie positive*. By rejecting psychology as a scientific discipline and reducing all data concerning the person to either biology or sociology he ignored introspection and the corresponding dimensions of the individual's conscious life. The person was not only one who could play a role, but one whose total reality consisted in playing that role.

More recently Gabriel Marcel has pointed up a number of unfortunate consequences which derive from considering the person only in terms of roles or functional relations. For in that case no account can be taken of one's proper self-identity. If only "surface" characteristics are considered, while excluding all attention to "depth",<sup>12</sup> then the person is empty; if the person can be analyzed fully in terms of external causes and relations it becomes increasingly devoid of intrinsic value. What is more, lack of personal identity makes it impossible to establish personal relations with others. Even that consistency between, or within, one's roles--which the Stoics as early proponents of this understanding of person considered to be the essence of a personal life--is left without foundation. Life could be reduced "in the words of Shakespeare `to a tale told by an idiot'".<sup>13</sup>

## *B. The Individual*

These difficulties suggest that attention must be directed to another level of meaning if the person is to find the resources required to play its roles. Rather than attempting to think of a role without an actor, it is important to look to the individual who assumes the role and expresses him or herself therein. Caution must be exercised here, however, lest the search for the subject or the self appear to reinforce the excesses of self-centeredness and individualism. This could be a special danger in the context of cultures whose positive stress on self-reliance and independence has been rooted historically in an atomistic understanding of individuals as single, unrelated entities. This danger is reflected, for example, in the common law understanding of judicial rulings, not as defining the nature of interpersonal relations, but simply as resolving conflicts between individuals whose lives happen to have intersected.

In this context it is helpful to note that when Aristotle laid the foundations for the Western understanding of the person he did so in the context of the Greek understanding of the physical universe as a unified, dynamic, quasi-life process in which all was included and all were related. Indeed, the term 'physical' was derived from the term for growth and the components of this process were seen always with, and in relation to, the others. (Similarly, modern physical theory identifies a uniform and all-inclusive pattern of relations such that any physical displacement, no matter how small, affects all other bodies). Within this unified pattern of relations the identification of multiple individuals, far from being destructive of unity, provides the texture required for personal life. Where individuals are differentiated by the moral tenor of their actions which in turn make a difference to other persons, distinctiveness becomes, not an impediment to, but a principle of, community.<sup>14</sup>

In order better to appreciate the members of a community it is helpful to consider them on three progressively more specific dimensions, first as instances of a particular type, that is, as substances; secondly as existing, that is, as subsisting individuals; and thirdly as self-conscious, that is, as persons. The order in which these three will be considered is not accidental, for while it is necessary to be of a certain definite type, it is more important to exist as an individual in one's own right; for the person, finally, it is important above all that one be self-conscious and free. Hence, our exposition begins with substance and the subsisting individual in order to identify some general and basic--though not specific or exclusive--characteristics of the person, whose distinctive self-awareness and freedom will be treated in the following sections.

1. *Substance*. It was Aristotle who identified substance as the basic component of the physical order; his related insights remain fundamental to understanding the individual as the subject of moral life. His clue to this first discovery appears in language. Comparing the usage of such terms as "running," and "runner" we find that the first is applied to the second, which in turn, however, is not said of anything else.<sup>15</sup> Thus, one may say of Mary that she is running, but one may not say that she is another person, e.g., John. This suggests the need to distinguish things that can be realized only in another (as running is had only in a runner) whence they derive their identity, from those which have their identity in their own right (e.g., John, the runner). A first and basic characteristic of the moral subject, and indeed of any substance, is that it have its identity in its own right rather than through another; only thus could a human being be responsible for one's action. Without substances with their distinct identities one could envisage only a structure of ideals and values inhabited, as it were, by agents. In this light the task of moral education would be merely to enable one to judge correctly according to progressively higher ideals. This, indeed,



would seem to be the implicit context of Kohlberg's focus upon moral dilemmas which, as seen earlier in this volume, omits not only the other dimensions of moral development but this personal identity as well. Aristotle points instead to a world of persons realizing values in their actions. In their complex reality of body, affections and mind they act morally and are the subjects of moral education. (See W. Kirkpatrick in R. Knowles, ed., *The Psychological Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*.)

Secondly, as the basic building blocks in the constitution of a world, these individuals are not merely undetermined masses. As the basic points of reference in discourse and the bases for the intelligibility for the real world these individual components must possess some essential determinateness, they must be of one or another kind or form. The individual, then, is not simply one thing rather than any other; he or she is a being of a definite--in this case, a human--kind,<sup>16</sup> relating to other beings each with its own nature or kind. Only thus can one's life in the universe have sense and be able to be valued.

Thirdly, being of a definite kind the individual has its own proper characteristics and is able to realize a specific or typical set of activities. These activities derive from, or are "born of" (from the latin, *natus*), the specific nature of the thing. The determination of what activity is moral will need to include not only the good to be derived from the action, but respect for the agent and his or her nature.

In the search for the subject of moral education, the work of Aristotle has made an essential contribution by directing our attention to three factors, namely: (a) individual beings, (b) who are particular instances of a definite kind, and hence (c) capable of specific types of activities. It should be noted that all three are concerned with the kind or type of the agent.<sup>17</sup> This is important, but it is not enough for moral education. One can know well enough what kind of thing a unicorn is but, as none has ever existed, they have never acted or entered the field of activity in which morality is found. Similarly, one might know what kind of musician is needed in order to complete an orchestra, but this does not mean that one is available to be engaged for a concert. In sum, in order to consider the field of moral action it is important to take account not only of the nature or kind of agent involved, but also of his or her existence and actions.

2. *Subsisting Individual*. Something of the greatest importance was bound to take place, therefore, when the mind expanded its range of awareness beyond the nature of things to what Shakespeare was to call the question: "to be or not to be." At that point the mind became able to take explicit account not only of the kind, but of the existence of the individual, by which it is constituted in the order of actual, and hence of acting, beings.

From this there followed a series of basic implications for the reality of person. It would no longer be considered as simply the relatively placid distinct or autonomous instance of some specific type. Rather, it would be understood in a much more dynamic manner as existing. This means not only being in its own right or, as it were, 'standing on its own two feet' (subsisting), but bursting in among the realities of this world as a new and active center (existing). This understanding incorporates all the above-mentioned characteristics of the individual substance, and adds three more which are proper to existence, namely, being complete, independent, and dynamically open to actions and to new actualization. Since existing or subsisting individuals include not only persons but rocks and trees, however, these characteristics, though fundamental, still will not be exclusive to the person.

First, a person must be whole or complete. As regards its nature it must have all that is required to be of its distinctive kind, just as by definition a three digit number cannot be made up of two

digits. Hence, if humans are recognized to be by nature both body and mind or body and soul, then the human mind or soul without the body would be neither a subsisting individual nor by implication a person, for it would lack a complete human nature. This is of special importance in view of the tendency of some to reduce the human person to only the mind, soul, or consciousness or to consider the person to be adequately protected if these alone are cared for. In fact the essential inclusion of body in the human person is as central to education as it is to human rights. The same, of course, is no less true of the mind or spirit in view of the tendency of others described by William James<sup>18</sup> to reduce the person to "nothing but" the inert by-products of physiology or functions of the structure of production and distribution of goods.

Further, the existing individual requires not merely a complete nature, but his or her proper existence. As existing, the individual is not merely an instance of a specific nature or kind, but a concrete reality asserting oneself and dynamically struggling to achieve one's fulfillment. In the person this goes beyond merely walking a course whose every step is already charted; it includes all the unique, fully individual choices by which a life is lived. It is subject then to combinations of the precarious and the stable, of tragedy and triumph in its self-realization. These were described by the American pragmatists and Continental existentialists as the very stuff of life, and hence by Dewey as the very stuff of education.

Secondly, as subsistent the person is independent. Being complete in its nature it is numerically individual and distinct from all else. In accord with this individual nature, one's existence is, in turn, unique, and establishes the subject as a being in its own right, independent of all else. This, of course, does not imply that the human or other living subject does not need nourishment, or that it was not generated by another: people do need people and much else besides. There is no question here of being self-sufficient or absolute. What is meant by independence is that the needs it has and the actions it performs are truly its own.

In turn, this means that in interacting with other subsistent individuals one's own contribution is distinctive and unique. This is commonly recognized at those special times when the presence of a mother, father, or special friend is required, and no one else will do. At other times as well, even when as a bus driver or a dentist I perform a standard service, my actions remain properly my own. This understanding is a prerequisite for education to responsibility in public as in private life. It is a condition too for overcoming depersonalization in a society in which we must fulfill ever more specialized and standardized roles.

Another dimension of this independence is that the human person as subsisting cannot simply be absorbed or assimilated by another. As complete in oneself one cannot be part of another, for as independent in existence one is distinct from all else. Hence, one cannot be assumed or taken up by any other person or group in such wise as to lose one's identity. In recent years awareness of this characteristic has generated a strong reaction against the tendencies of mass society totally to absorb the person and to reduce all to mere functions in a larger whole called the state, the industrial complex, or the consumer society.

As noted above it is perhaps the special challenge of the present day, however, to keep this awareness of one's distinctive independence from degenerating into selfishness, to keep individuality from becoming individualism. The individual existent, seen as sculpted out of the flow and process of the physical universe, cannot be rightly thought of as isolated. Such an existent is always with others, depending on them for birth, sustenance and expression. In this context, to be distinct or individual is not to be isolated or cut off, but to be able to relate more precisely and intensively to others. My relation to the chair upon which I sit and the desk upon which I write is not diminished but made possible by the distinction and independence of the three of us. Their

retention of their distinctness and distinctive shapes enables me to integrate them into my task of writing. Because I depend still more intimately upon food, I must correlate more carefully its distinctive characteristics with my precise needs and capacities. On the genetic level it is the careful choice of distinctive strains that enables the development of a new individual with the desired characteristics. On the social level the more personable the members of the group the greater and more intense is its unity. Moving thus from instruments such as desks, to alimentation, to lineage, to society suggests that as one moves upward through the levels of beings' distinctness, far from being antithetic to community, is in fact its basis. This gives hope that at its higher reaches, namely, in the moral life, the distinctiveness of autonomy and freedom may not need to be compromised, but may indeed be the basis for a community of persons bound together in mutual love and respect.

The third characteristic of the subsistent individual to be considered is this openness to new actualization and to interrelation with others. The existence by which one erupted into this world of related subjects is not simply self-contained; it is expressed in a complex symphony of actions which are properly one's own: thus, running can be said only of an existing individual, such as Mary, who runs. What is more, actions determine their subject, for it is only by running that Mary herself is constituted precisely as a runner. This will be central to the last part of this study: the person as moral agent.

It is important too for our relations to and with others. For the actions into which our existence flows, while no less our own, reach beyond ourselves. The same action which makes us agents shapes the world around us and, for good or ill, communicates to others. All the plots of all the stories ever told are about this; but their number pales in comparison with all the lives ever lived, each of which is a history of personal interactions.<sup>19</sup> The actions of an individual existent reflect one's individuality with its multiple possibilities, and express this to and with others. It is in this situation of dynamic openness,<sup>20</sup> of communication and of community that the moral growth of persons takes place. As subsistent therefore the person is characteristically a being, not only in oneself, but *with* other beings. About this more must be said below.

To summarize: thus far we have seen the early derivation of the notion of person from mask. For this to evolve into the contemporary notion of person a strong awareness both of the nature and of the existence of independent individuals needed to be developed. The first was achieved by the Greeks who identified within the one physical process basically different types of things. Substances are the individual instances of these specific types or natures. This provides the basis for consciousness of one's own nature and for relating to others in its terms within the overall pattern of nature(s).

There were limitations to such a project, for in its terms alone one would be ultimately but an instance of one's nature; in the final analysis the goal of a physical being would be but to continue one's species through time. This was true for the Greeks and may still be a sufficient basis for the issues considered in sociobiology. It does not allow for adequate attention to the person's unique and independent reality. This required the subsequent development of an awareness of existence as distinct from nature or essence, as that by which one enters into the world and is constituted as a being in one's own right. On this basis the subsisting individual can be seen to be whole and independent, and hence the dynamic center of action in this world.

Still more is required, however; for the above characteristics, while foundational for a person, are had as well by animals and trees. These too, each in their own ways, are wholes that are independent and active in this world. In addition to the above realities of substance and of

subsisting individuals, therefore, it is necessary to identify that which is distinctive of the human subsistent and constitutes it finally as personal, namely, self-consciousness and freedom.

### **The Person: A Self-Conscious and Free Subject**

Self-consciousness and will had been central to philosophies of the person in classical times; indeed, at one point Augustine claimed that men were nothing else than will. After Descartes' reformulation of metaphysics in terms of the thinking self, however, the focus upon self-consciousness by John Locke and upon the will by Kant brought the awareness of these distinctive characteristics of the person to a new level of intensity and exclusivity. This constituted a qualitatively new and distinctively modern understanding of the person. It is necessary to see in what these characteristics consist and how they relate to the subsisting individual analyzed above.

#### *A. Self-Consciousness and Freedom*

John Locke undertook to identify the nature of the person within the context of his general effort to provide an understanding which would enable people to cooperate in building a viable political order. This concentration upon the mind is typical of modern thought and of its contribution to our appreciation of the person. By focusing upon knowledge Locke proceeded to elaborate, not only consciousness in terms of the person, but the person in terms of consciousness. He considered personal identity to be a complex notion composed from the many simple ideas which constitute our consciousness. By reflection we perceive that we perceive and thereby are able to be, as it were, present to ourselves and to recognize ourselves as distinct from all other thinking things.<sup>21</sup> Memory, which is also an act of consciousness, enables us to recognize these acts of consciousness in different times and places. Locke saw the memory, by uniting present acts of awareness with similar past acts, as not merely discovering but as creating personal identity. This binding of myself as past consciousness to myself as present consciousness constitutes the continuing reality of the person. Essentially, it is a private matter revealed directly only to oneself, and only indirectly to other persons.

Because Locke's concern for knowledge was part of his overriding concern to find a way to build social unity in a divided country he saw his notion of the self as the basis of an ethic for both private and public life. As conscious of pleasure and pain the self is capable of happiness or misery, "and so is concerned for itself".<sup>22</sup> What is more, happiness and misery matter only inasmuch as they enter one's self-consciousness as a matter of self-concern directing one's activities. He sees the pattern of public morality, with its elements of justice as rewarding a prior good act by happiness and as punishing an evil act by misery, to be founded upon this identity of the self as a continuing consciousness from the time of the act to that of the reward or punishment. 'Person' is the public name of this self as open to public judgment and social response; it is "a forensic term appropriating actions and their merit".<sup>23</sup>

This early attempt to delineate the person on the basis of consciousness locates a number of factors essential for personhood such as the importance of self-awareness, the ability to be concerned for oneself, and the basis this provides for the notions of responsibility and public accountability. These are the foundations of Locke's *Letters Concerning Toleration* which were to be of such great importance in the development of subsequent social and political structures in many parts of the world.

There are reasons to believe, however, that, while correct in focusing upon consciousness, he did not push his analysis far enough to integrate the whole person. Leibniz, in his *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, was quick to point out some of these reasons in a detailed response. Centering personal identity in consciousness, Locke distinguished it from the notion of the person as that which could be identified by a body of a particular shape. This led him to admit that it is conceivable that the one consciousness, self or person could exist in different bodies a thousand years remote one from another<sup>24</sup> or, conversely, that multiple selves could inhabit the same body.

This is more than an issue of "names ill-used";<sup>25</sup> it is symptomatic of the whole cluster of problems which derive from isolating human consciousness from the physical identity of the human self. These include problems not only regarding communication with other persons for which one depends upon physical signs, but regarding the life of the person in a physical world in whose unity and harmony one's consciousness has no real share, and indeed in contrast to which it is defined.<sup>26</sup> Recently, existential phenomenologists have begun to respond to the perverse, desiccating effect this has had even upon consciousness itself, while environmentalists have pointed up the destruction it has wrought upon nature.

This implies a problem for personal identity itself. Locke would claim that this resides in the continuity established by linking the past with the present in one's memory.<sup>27</sup> But, as there is no awareness of a substantial self from which this consciousness proceeds,<sup>28</sup> what remains is but a sequence of perceptions or a flow of consciousness recorded by memory.

Finally, Leibniz would question Locke's claim to have provided even that public or forensic notion of the self by which he sought to provide a sufficient basis for legal and political relations. Memory can deal with the past and the present, but not with the future; whereas planning and providing for the future is the main task of a rationally ordered society. Further, Locke's conclusion, that since the self is consciousness the same self could inhabit many bodies of different appearances, would undermine the value of public testimony, and thereby the administration of justice.<sup>29</sup> Though self-consciousness is certainly central and distinctive of the person, more is required for personhood than a sequence of consciousness, past and present.

Another approach was attempted by Kant whose identification of the salient characteristics of the person has become a standard component for modern sensitivity. Whereas Locke had developed the notion of the person in terms of consciousness predicated upon experience, Kant developed it on the requirements of an ethics based upon will alone. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of this approach to the person lie in his effort to lay for ethics a foundation that is independent of experience. He did so because he considered human knowledge to be essentially limited to the spatial and temporal orders and unable to explain its own presuppositions. Whatever be thought of this, by looking within the self for a new and absolute beginning he led the modern mind to a new awareness of the reality and nature of the person.

For Kant the person is above all free, both in oneself and in relation to others; in no sense is the person to be used by others as a means. From this he concluded that it is essential to avoid any dependence (heteronomy) on anything beyond oneself and, within oneself, on anything other than one's own will. The fundamental thrust of that will is its unconditional command to act lawfully; this must be the sole basis for an ethics worthy of man. In turn, "the only presupposition under which . . . (the categorical imperative) is alone possible . . . is the Idea of freedom."<sup>30</sup> As free the person must not be legislated to by anyone or on the basis of anything else; to avoid heteronomy one must be an end-in-oneself. It was Kant's self-described goal to awaken interest in the moral law through this "glorious ideal" of a universal realm of persons as ends-in-themselves (rational

beings).<sup>31</sup> The person, then, is not merely independent, as is any subject; he is a law-making member of society. This means that the person has, not only value which is to be protected and promoted, but true dignity as well, for he is freely bound by and obeys laws which he gives to himself.<sup>32</sup> As this humanity is to be respected both in oneself and in all others one must act in such wise that if one's actions were to constitute a universal law they would promote a cohesive life for all rational agents.

This "glorious ideal" has been perhaps the major contribution to the formation of our modern understanding of ourselves as persons. At the minimum, it draws a line against what is unacceptable, namely, whatever is contrary to the person as an end-in-him-or-herself, and sets thereby a much needed minimal standard for action. At the maximum, as with most *a priori* positions, it expresses an ideal for growth by pointing out the direction, and thereby providing orientation, for the development of the person. In Kohlberg's schema of moral development it constitutes the sixth or highest stage, and hence the sense and goal of his whole project--though he notes rightly that this is not an empirically available notion.

Further, this bespeaks a certain absoluteness of the individual will which is essential if the person is not to be subject to domination by the circumstances he encounters. If one must be more than a mere function of one's environment--whether this be one's state, or business, or neighborhood--then Kant has made a truly life-saving observation in noting that the law of the will must extend beyond any one good or particular set of goods.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to think that still more is needed for an understanding of the person. In Part I of his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant correctly rules out anything other than, or heteronomous to, human freedom and will as an adequate basis for ethics, at least as far as using one's own ability to think and to decide are concerned. Nor does he omit the fact that these individuals live their lives with others in this world. As the good is mediated by their concrete goods, however, a role for experience must be recognized if right reason is to conform to the real good in things. Further, there is need to know more of the reality of the person in order to understand, (a) not only how will and freedom provide the basis for ethical behavior, but (b) by what standards or values behavior can be judged to be ethical and (c) how ethical behavior is integral to the project of the person's self-realization. (Various facets of this are treated in all the chapters above.) Something more than a postulation of freedom (along with the immortality of the soul and God) is essential to enable the development of the person to be guided throughout by his "glorious ideal".

In sum, Locke and Kant have contributed essentially to delineating the nature of the person for the modern mind. Both have pointed up that which distinguishes the person from other subjects. Focusing upon knowledge, Locke showed the person to be an identity of continuing consciousness which is self-aware and "concerned for itself". Focusing upon the will and its freedom, Kant showed the person to be an end-in-itself.

By attending directly to consciousness and freedom, however, both left out problems which are similar and of great importance to the present project. The first regards the way in which consciousness and freedom are realized in the person as a unique identity with a proper place in society and indeed in reality as a whole. It is true, as Locke says, that the term person expresses self-awareness and continuing consciousness, as well as its status in the public forum. But, for moral education one needs more than an isolated view of that which is most distinctive of man; one needs to know what the person is in his or her entirety, how one is able to stand among other persons as a subject, and how in freedom one is to undertake one's rightful responsibilities. One educates not consciousness or freedom, but conscious and free subjects or persons. Further, it is

necessary to understand the basis of the private as well as the public life of the person, for one is more than a role, more than a citizen, or a function of state. The second problem regards the way in which the person can attain his goal of full self-awareness, freedom, and responsibility, namely, how the person can achieve his or her fulfillment through time and with others.

In sum, what Locke and Kant discovered about the person by considering self-awareness for the political arena, or in the abstract, needs now to be integrated with what was seen regarding the individual in Part I in order to constitute the integral person as a rational and free subject.

### *B. The Self Conscious and Free Subject*

While it has been said that ancient thinkers had no concept of the person, a very important study by Catherine De Vogel<sup>33</sup> has shown that there was indeed a significant sense of person and of personality among the ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as a search for its conditions and possibilities. It will be helpful to look at this in order to identify some of the cultural resources for understanding the way in which self-consciousness and freedom are rooted in the subject and constitute the person with which moral education is concerned. Above, we saw a certain progression from the Greek philosophical notion of the individual as an instance of a general type to a more ample existential sense of the subject as an independent whole, which nonetheless shares with others in the same specific nature. It is time now to see how this relates to self-consciousness and freedom.

The Greeks had a certain sense for, and even fascination with, individuals in the process of grappling with the challenge to live their freedom. T.B.L. Webster notes that "Homer was particularly interested in them (his heroes) when they took difficult decisions or exhibited characteristics which were not contained in the traditional picture of the fighting man."<sup>34</sup> In the final analysis, however, the destiny of his heroes was determined by fate, from which even Zeus could not free them. Hence, an immense project of liberation was needed in order to appreciate adequately the full freedom of the moral agent.

This required establishing: (a) that the universe is ruled by law, (b) that a person could have access to this law through reason, and (c) that the person has command of his relation to this law. These elements were developed by Heraclitus around 500 B.C. He saw that the diverse physical forces could not achieve the equilibrium required in order to constitute a universe without something which is one. This cosmic, divine law or Logos is the ruling principle of the coherence of all things, not only in the physical, but in the moral and social orders. A person can assume the direction of his life by correcting his understanding and determining his civil laws and actions according to the Logos, which is at once divine law and nature. In this lies wisdom.<sup>35</sup>

This project has two characteristics, namely, self-reflection and selfdetermination. First, as the law or Logos is not remote, but within man—"The soul has a Logos within it"<sup>36</sup>--the search for the Logos is also a search for oneself: "I began to search for myself."<sup>37</sup> Self-reflection is then central to wisdom. Second, the attainment of wisdom requires on the part of man a deliberate choice to follow the universal law. This implies a process of interior development by which the Logos which is within "increases itself".<sup>38</sup>

A similar pattern of thought is found in the Stoic philosophers for whom there is a principle of rationality or "germ of logos" of which the soul is part, and which develops by natural growth.<sup>39</sup> A personal act is required to choose voluntarily the law of nature, which is also the divine will.

These insights of Heraclitus, though among the earliest of the philosophers, were pregnant with a number of themes which correspond to Kant's three postulates for the ethical life: the immortality of the soul, freedom and God. The first of these would be mined by subsequent thinkers in their effort to explore the nature of the person as a physical subject that is characteristically self-conscious and free. The implications of Heraclitus' insight that the multiple and diverse can constitute a unity only on the basis of something that is one gradually became evident, binding the personal characteristics of self-consciousness and freedom to the subject with its characteristics of wholeness, independence and interrelatedness. The first step was Plato's structure for integrating the multiple instances of a species by their imitation of, or participation in, the idea or archetype of that species.<sup>40</sup> This, in turn, images still higher and more central ideas, and ultimately the highest idea which is inevitably the Good or the One.

Aristotle took the second step by applying the same principle to the internal structure of living beings. He concluded that the unity of their disparate components could be explained only by something one, which he termed the soul or *psyche*, whence the term 'psychology.' The body is organized by this form which he described as "the first grade of actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it."<sup>41</sup> For Aristotle, however, the unifying principle of a physical subject could not be also the principle of man's higher mental life, his life of reason. Hence, there remained the need to understand the person as integrating self-consciousness and freedom in a subject which is nonetheless physical.

Over one-thousand years later Thomas Aquinas took this third step, drawing out of Heraclitus' insight its implications for the unity of the person with its full range of physical and mental life. He did not trace the physical to one form or soul and the higher conscious life to another principle existing separately from the body as had the Aristotelian commentators, nor did he affirm two separate souls as did Bonaventure. Rather, Thomas showed that there could be but one principle or soul for the entire person, both mind and body. He did this by rigorously carrying out under the principle of non-contradiction the implications of the existence of the subject noted above. One subject could have but one existence--lest it be not one but two. This existence in turn could pertain to but one essence or nature, again lest it be and not be of that nature; and for the same reason the one essence could be of but one form. Hence, there could be only one formal principle or soul for both the physical and the free self-conscious dimensions of a person. This rendered obsolete Aristotle's duality of these principles for man and founded the essential and integral humanness of both mind and body in the unity of the one person.<sup>42</sup>

This progression of steps leading to the one principle, which enables that which is complex to constitute nonetheless a unity, points, in the person, to the one form which is commonly called the soul. By this single formal principle what Locke articulated only as a disembodied consciousness and Kant as an autonomous will are able to exist as a properly human subject. This is physical truly but not exclusively, for it transcends the physical to include also self-consciousness and freedom. Similarly, it exists in its own right, yet does so in such wise that it exists essentially with others as a person in society.

There are pervasive implications for education in such an integration of the physical with the self-conscious dimensions of the person through a single principle. One does not become a person when one is accepted by society; on the contrary, by the form through which one is a person one is an autonomous end-in-oneself and has claim to be responded to as such by others. Hence, though for his or her human development the person has a unique need for acceptance, respect and love, the withholding of such acceptance by others--whether individuals, families or states--does not deprive them of their personhood. One does not have to be accepted in order to have a claim to



acceptance. (Hence, even in circumstances of correction and punishment, when a person's actions are being explicitly repudiated, he cannot be treated as a mere thing.) The right to an education is based within the person who has claims or human rights which must be responded to by family and society.

Similarly, it is not necessary that the person manifest in overt behavior signs of self-awareness and responsibility. From genetic origin and physical form it is known that the infant and young child is an individual human developing according to a single unifying and integrating principle of both its physical and its rational life.<sup>43</sup> The rights and the protection of a human person belong to a person by right prior to an ability consciously to conceive or to articulate them. Further, the physical actions of young children through which they express themselves in their own way and respond to others are truly human. Indeed, though the earlier the stage in life the more physical the manner of receiving and expressing affection, the earliest months and years appear to be the most determinative of one's lifetime ability to relate to others with love and affection.

Finally, attempts to modify the behavior of a person must proceed according to distinctively human norms if they are not to be destructive. Despite at earlier life stages greater operational similarities to some animals, only by an abstraction can infants and very young children be said to be small animals. They are, in fact, human persons and integrally so in each of their human actions and interactions. Not to attend to this is to fail to realize who in fact is being educated to the detriment and dishonor of both the person and the educative process.

There is a second insight of great potential importance in the thought of Heraclitus. When he refers to the Logos<sup>44</sup> as being very deep he suggests multiple dimensions of the soul. Indeed, it must be so if human life is complex and its diverse dimensions have their principle in the one soul. Plato thought of these as parts of the soul; in these terms the development of oneself as a person would consist in bringing these parts into proper subordination one to another. This state is called justice, the "virtue of the soul".<sup>45</sup> Both the *Republic* and the *Laws* reflect amply his concern for education, character formation, and personal development understood as the process of attaining that state of justice. The way to this is progressive liberation from captivity by the objects of sense knowledge and sense desires through spiritual training, as described in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. All this prepares the way for what is essential, namely, the contemplation of the transcendent Good. This alone establishes that inner harmony of soul through which the person is constituted as free and responsible, both in principle and in act. Because this vision, not only of some goods, but of the transcendent Good, cannot be communicated by teaching but remains "an extremely personal interior vision",<sup>46</sup> the uncalculating and unmeasured love shared in family, Church and other communities has special importance for moral education.

By the human form or soul the human individual as a person is open in principle, not only to particular states of affairs or events, but to the one source, logos and goal of all. Through this, in turn, one is able to take account of the full meaning of each thing and freely to relate oneself to others in the coordinating virtue of philanthropia, the love of all mankind.<sup>47</sup> As it is of foundational importance for a truly moral life to have not merely access to some goods, but an ability to evaluate them in terms of the Good, the form or soul as the single organizing and vivifying principle of the person is the real foundation for the person as an end in oneself.

Correlatively, recent thought has made crucial strides toward reintegrating the person in one's world. The analytic process of identifying the components of the world process initiated by the Greeks was inherently risky, for any imperfection in the understanding of personal identity would distract from grounding the person in the One. Cumulatively, the intensive modern concentration

upon freedom in terms of self-consciousness would generate an isolating and alienating concentration upon self.<sup>48</sup>

Some developments in recent thought have made important contributions to correcting this individualist--even potentially solipsist-bias. One is the attention recently paid to language and to the linguistic character of the person. Our consciousness is not only evoked, but shaped, by the pattern of the language in which we are nurtured. In our highly literate culture--many would say in all cultures--the work of the imagination which accompanies and facilitates that of the intellect is primarily verbal. Hence, rather than ideas being developed and then merely expressed by language, our thought is born in language. As this language is not one's private creation but that of our community over a long period, conscious acts, even about ourselves, involve participation in that community. To say that our nature is linguistic is to say that it is essentially with others.

A similar point, but on another level of insight, was developed by Martin Heidegger and laid the basis for the stress among many existential thinkers on the importance of considering the person as being in community. As conscious and intentional, one is essentially, not closed within oneself, but open to the world; one's self-realization depends upon and indeed consists in one's being in the world. Therefore it is not possible to think of persons in themselves and then to add some commerce with their surroundings; instead persons exist and can be conceived only as beings-in-the-world. Here the term 'in' expresses more than a merely spatial relation; it adds an element of being acquainted or familiar with, of being concerned for, and of sharing. At root this is the properly personal relation.<sup>49</sup>

From what was said of being-in-the-world it follows that the person is also being-with-others, for one is not alone in sharing in this world. Just as I enter into and share in the world, so also do other persons. Hence, as essentially sharing-in-the-world, our being is also essentially a sharing-with-others; the world of the person is a world in which we are essentially with others. In this light a study of the existence of the rational subject with its hopes and its efforts toward self-realization with others must center ultimately upon understanding the moral development of the person through education.

## **Moral Growth and the Development of Character**

Recent advances in this project are being made by interweaving two main streams of thought regarding the person: one considers the subject as existing in one's own right as conscious and free; the other situates this consciousness and freedom in the person as acting in the world with other persons. Together they provide a context for understanding the development of the moral awareness of the person.

### *A. The Person as Moral Agent*

In Aristotle's project of distinguishing the components of the physical process, actions and attributes were found to be able to exist and to be intelligible only in a substance which existed in its own right. (There could be no running without a runner.) Actions, as distinct from the substantive nature or essence, could appear to be added thereto in a relatively external or "quantitative" manner. Subsequent developments in understanding the subject in terms of existence have provided a protection against this externalism. In relation to existence, essence does not merely specify the specific nature or kind of the thing; it is rather the way in which each thing is or each living being lives. Hence, for a person it implies and calls for the full range of activities

of a human being. Indeed, essence is often termed nature (from *natus* or born) precisely as that from which these life-acts derive.<sup>50</sup> These actions, in turn, cannot be mere additions to the person; they are the central determinants of the quality of one's very life. It is not just that one can do more or less, but that by so doing one becomes a more or less kind, loving, or generous person.

A person should be understood also in terms of his or her goals, for activities progressively modify and transform one in relation to the perfection of which one is by nature capable and which one freely chooses. Thus, though infants are truly and quite simply human beings, they are good only in an initial sense, namely, as being members of the human species. What they will become, however, lies in the future; hence they begin to be categorized as good or bad people only after and in view of their actions. Even then it is thought unfair to judge or evaluate persons at an early age, before it can be seen how they will "turn out" or what they will "make of themselves", that is, what character and hence constant pattern of action they will develop.

Further, one's progress or lack thereof can be judged only in terms of acting in a manner proportionate to one's nature. A horse may be characterized as good or bad on the basis of its ability to run, but not to fly. One must be true to one's nature, which in that sense serves as a norm of action; in this new sense I am a law to myself, namely, I must never act as less than one having a human nature with its self-consciousness and freedom. Below we shall see a way in which being true to this nature implies constituting both my self and my world.

Boethius defined classically the person as "an individual substance of a rational nature".<sup>51</sup> In this Locke focused upon self-consciousness. Conscious nature can be understood on a number of levels. First, it might be seen as a reflection or passive mirroring in man of what takes place around him. This does not constitute new being, but merely understands what is already there. Secondly, if this consciousness is directed to the self it can be called self-knowledge and makes of the subject an object for one's act of knowledge. Thirdly, consciousness can regard one's actions properly as one's own. By concerning the self precisely as the subject of one's own actions, it makes subjective what had been objective in the prior self-knowledge; it is reflexive rather than merely reflective.

This self-conscious experience depends upon the objective reality of the subject with all the characteristics described above in the section on the self-conscious and free subject. This, in turn, is shaped by the reflexive and hence free experiences of discovering, choosing, and committing oneself. In these reflexive acts the subject in a sense constitutes oneself, being manifested or disclosed to oneself as concrete, distinct, and indeed unique. This is the distinctively personal manner of self-actuation of the conscious being or person.

The result for the person is a unique realization of that independence which above was seen to characterize all subsistent individuals. Beyond the mirroring of surrounding conditions and of those things that happen to one, beyond even the objective realization of oneself as affected by those events, the person exists reflexively as their subject and as a source of action. As a person one has an inward, interior life of which one alone is the responsible source. This implies for the person an element of mystery which can never be fully explicated or exhausted. Much can be proposed by other persons and things, much can even be imposed upon me. But my self-consciousness is finally my act and no one else's. How I assess and respond to my circumstances is finally my decision, which relates to, but is never simply the result of, exterior factors. Here finally lies the essence of freedom, of which the ability to choose between alternatives is but one implication. What is essential for a free life is not that I always retain an alternative, but that I can determine myself and carry through with consistency the implications of my self-determination even, and at times especially, in the most straightening of circumstances. In this the personal

finally transcends that growth process originally called the *physis* or the physical and has been considered rightly to be spiritual as well.

This, of course, is not to imply isolation from one's physical and social world; rather it bespeaks in the world a personal center which is self-aware and self-determining. More than objective consciousness of oneself as acting, the inward reflexion at the origin of my action is that according to which I freely determine<sup>52</sup> and experience myself as the one who acts in freedom. The bond of consciousness with action as deriving from self-determination is crucial for a full recognition of subjectivity. It protects this from reduction to the subjectivism of an isolated consciousness which, being separated from action, would be finally more arbitrary than absolute.

Self-determination in action has another implication: in originating an action the person's experience is not merely of that action as happening to or in him, but of a dynamism in which he participates efficaciously. As a self I experience myself immanently as wholly engaged in acting and know this efficacy to be properly my own, my responsibility. Hence, by willing the good or evil character of an action, I specify, not only the action which results, but myself as the originator of that action.

Finally, I am aware of my responsibility for results of my actions which extend beyond myself and shape my world. The good or evil my actions bring about is rooted in good or evil decisions on my part. In making choices which shape my world I form also myself for good or evil. By their subjective character actions become part of the person's unique process of self-realization.<sup>53</sup>

Action then manifests an important dimension of the person.<sup>54</sup> On the one hand, the need to act shows that the person, though a subject and independent, is not at birth perfect, self-sufficient or absolute. On the contrary, persons are conscious of perfection that they do not possess, but toward which they are dynamically oriented. The person is then essentially active and creative.

On the other hand, this activity is essentially marked by responsibility. This implies that, while the physical or social goods that one can choose are within one's power, they do not overpower one. Whatever their importance, in the light of the person's openness to the good as such one can always overrule the power of their attraction. When one does choose them it is the person--not the goods--that is responsible for that choice.

Both of these point to two foundations of the person's freedom, and hence of one's ability to be a self-determining end-in-oneself. First, one's mind or intellect is oriented, not to one or another true thing or object of knowledge, but to truth itself and hence to whatever is or can be. Second and in a parallel manner, the person's will is not limited to--or hence by--any particular good or set of goods. Rather, because oriented to the Good itself, it is freely open to any and all goods.

## *B. Moral Growth and Character Development*

In view of this it is time to look more closely into the relation of the person to the good, for it is there that one finds the drama of the self-realization of the person and the development of one's moral life. The good is first manifest in one's experience as the object of desire, namely, as what is sought when absent. This implies that the good is basically what completes a being; it is the "per-fect," understood in its etymological sense as that which is completed or realized through and through. Hence, once the good or perfection is achieved it is no longer desired or sought, but enjoyed. This is reflected in the manner in which each thing, even a stone, retains the being or reality it has and resists reduction to non-being or nothing. The most that we can do is to change or transform a thing into something else; we cannot annihilate it. Similarly, a plant or tree given the right conditions grows to full stature and fruition. Finally, an animal protects its life--fiercely

if necessary--and seeks out the food needed for its strength. Food, in turn, as capable of contributing to animal's realization or perfection, is in this regard an auxiliary good or means.

In this manner things as good, that is, as actually realizing some degree of perfection, are the basis for an interlocking set of relations. These relations are based upon both the actual perfection things possess and the potential perfection they lack but to which they are directed. The good is dynamic both as attracting when it has not yet been attained and as constituting one's fulfillment upon its attainment. Goods then are not arbitrary or simply a matter of wishful thinking; they are rather the full development of things and all that contributes thereto. In this ontological or objective sense all beings are good to the extent that they exist and thereby can contribute to the perfection of others.

1. *Values.* The moral good is a more narrow field; it concerns only one's free and responsible actions. This has the objective reality of the ontological good noted above, for it concerns real actions which stand in distinctive relation to our own perfection and that of others, and indeed to the physical universe and to God as well. Hence many possible patterns of actions could be objectively right because they promote the good of those involved. Others, precisely as inconsistent with the real good of the persons or things, are objectively disordered or misordered.

Because the realm of objective relations is almost numberless whereas our actions are single it is necessary not only to choose in general between the good and the bad, but in each case to choose which of the often innumerable possibilities one will render concrete. However broad or limited the options, the act as responsible and moral is essentially dependent upon its being willed by a subject. In order to follow the emergence of the field of concrete moral action, it is important to examine therefore not only the objective aspect, namely, the nature of the persons, actions, and things involved. In addition one must consider the action in relation to the subject, namely, to the person who in the context of their society and culture appreciates and values the good of this action, chooses it over its alternatives, and eventually wills its actualization.

The term 'value' here is of special note. It was derived from the economic sphere where it meant the amount of a commodity by which it attained a certain worth. This is reflected also in the term 'axiology' whose root means "weighing as much" or "worth as much". It requires an objective content--the good must really "weigh in", and make a real difference. But the term 'value' expresses this good especially as related to wills which actually acknowledge it as a good and as desirable.<sup>55</sup> Thus, different groups of persons or individuals, and at different periods, have distinct sets of values. They are sensitive to and prize a distinct set of goods or, more likely, establish a distinctive ranking in the degree to which they prize various goods. By so doing they delineate among the limitless order of objective goods a certain pattern of values which, to an extensive degree, mirrors their corporate free choices and constitutes a basic component of their culture.

By giving shape to the culture this constitutes as well the prime pattern and gradation of goods which persons born into that culture experience from their earliest years. In these terms they interpret their developing relations. Young persons peer out at the world through a lens, as it were, formed by their family and culture and reflecting the pattern of choices made by that community throughout its history, often in its most trying circumstances. Like a pair of glasses this does not create the object; but it focuses upon certain of the goods involved rather than upon others. This becomes the basic orienting factor for one's affective and emotional life. In time, it encourages and reinforces certain patterns of action which, in turn, reinforce this pattern of values.

2. *Virtues*. Martin Heidegger describes a process by which the field of moral action is gradually shaped by a subject. It consists in the person's transcending oneself or breaking beyond mere self-concern. In this one projects outward as a being whose very nature is to share with others for whom one cares and is concerned. In this process one constitutes new purposes or goals for the sake of which action is to be undertaken. In relation to these goals certain combinations of possibilities, with their natures and norms, take on particular importance and begin thereby to enter into the makeup of one's world of meaning. In this light freedom becomes more than mere spontaneity, more than choice as examined in Ch. IV above, and more even than self-determination in the sense of causing oneself to act as described above in the present chapter. It shapes--the phenomenologist would say even that it constitutes--my world as the ambit of my human decisions and dynamic action.<sup>56</sup> This is the making of myself as a person in a community.

To see this it is necessary to look more closely at the dynamic openness and projection which characterize the concrete person--not only in one's will, but in one's body and psyche as well. In order to be truly self-determining the person must not merely moderate a bargaining session among these three, but constitute a new and active dynamism in which all dimensions achieve their properly personal character.<sup>57</sup>

Bodily or somatic dynamisms, such as the pumping of blood, are basically non-reflective and reactive. They are implemented through the nervous system in response to stimuli; generally they are below the level of human consciousness, from which they enjoy a degree of autonomy. Nonetheless, they are in harmony with the person as a whole, of which they are an integral dimension. As such they are implicit in my conscious and self-determined choices regarding personal action with others in this world.

Dynamisms of the psyche are typified by emotivity. In some contrast to the more reactive character of lower bodily dynamism and in a certain degree to the somatic as a whole, these are based rather within the person. They include, not only affectivity, but sensation and emotions as well. These feelings range from some which are physical to others which are moral, religious and aesthetic. Such emotions have two important characteristics. First, they are not isolated or compartmentalized, but include and interweave the various dimensions of the person. Hence, they are crucial to the integration of a personal life. They play a central role in the proximity one feels to values and to the intensity of one's response thereto. Secondly, they are relatively spontaneous and contribute to the intensity of a personal life. This, however, is not adequate to make them fully personal, for personal life is not only what happens in me, but above all what I determine to happen. This can range beyond and even against my feelings.

It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish two directions or dimensions of one's personal transcendence. The first relates to one's world as the object of either one's knowledge or one's will. This might be called horizontal as an activation of a person inasmuch as he or she relates to other things and especially to other persons. This relation would be poorly conceived were it thought to be merely an addition to a fully constituted person. On the contrary, the person as such is essentially transcendent, that is, open to others. One requires this interaction with others in order to have a language and all that this implies for the formation of thought, to have a moral code to assist one in the direction of one's will, and above all to have a family and community and thus the possibility of sharing in the hope and anguish, the love and concern, which gives meaning to life.

The other, or vertical dimension of transcendence characterizes the person and his action in their most properly personal sense. Personal actions are carried out through a will which is open and responsive to the Good and as such able to respond to, without being determined by, any particular good or value. Thus, it is finally up to the person to determine him or herself to act. One

is able to do this because personal consciousness is not only reflective of myself as an additional object of knowledge, but reflexive or self-aware in its conscious acts.

If such actions derived merely from my powers or faculties of knowledge or will, in acting I would determine only the object of my action. Instead, these actions derive from my self as subject or person; hence, in acting I determine equally, and even primarily, myself. This is self-determination, self-realization, and self-fulfillment in the strongest sense of those terms. Not only are others to be treated as ends in themselves; in acting I myself am an end.

This process of deliberate choice and decision manifests a dimension of the person which transcends the somatic and psychic dynamisms. Where the somatic was extensively reactive, the person through affection or appetite is fundamentally oriented to the good and positively attracted by a set of values. These are not merely known by the mind, but evoke an active response from the psychic dynamisms of the emotions in the context of a responsible freedom.

It is in the dimension of responsibility that one encounters the properly moral dimension of life. For in order to live, oneself and with others, one must be able to know and choose what is truly conducive to one's good and that of others. To do this the person must be able to judge the true value of what is to be chosen, that is, its objective worth both in itself and in relation to others. This is moral truth: the judgment whether the act makes the person good in the sense of bringing true individual and social fulfillment or the contrary.

In this I retain that deliberation and voluntary choice whereby I exercise my proper self-awareness, self-possession, and self-governance. By determining to follow this judgment I am able to overcome determination by stimuli and even by culturally ingrained values, and to turn these instead into openings for free action in concert with others. This vertical transcendence in one's actions as willed enables the person to shape his or her self, as well as one's physical surroundings and community.

This can be for good or for ill, depending on the character of the actions. Only morally good actions contribute to the fulfillment of the person, that is, to one's development and perfection as a person. It is the function of conscience as man's moral judgment to identify this element of moral goodness in action.<sup>58</sup> Moral freedom consists then in the ability to follow one's conscience. This must be established through the dynamisms within the person, and must be protected and promoted by the related physical and social realities. This is a basic right of the person--perhaps the basic social right--because only thus can one transcend one's conditions and strive for self-fulfillment. Moral education is directed particularly at capacitating the person for the effective exercise of this right.

3. *Character.* The work of conscience is not a merely theoretical judgment, but the development and exercise of self-possession through one's actions. In this one's reference to moral truth constitutes one's sense of duty, for the action that is judged to be truly good is experienced also as that which I ought to do. As this is exercised or lived, patterns of action develop which are habitual only in the sense of being repeated. They are modes of activity with which we are familiar; in their exercise--along with the coordinate natural dynamisms they require--we are practiced; and with practice comes facility and spontaneity. These constitute the pattern of our life, its basic, continuing and pervasive shaping influence. For this reason they have been considered classically to be the basic indicators of what our life as a whole will add up to or, as is often said, "amount to". Since Socrates the technical term used for these specially developed capabilities is virtues.

It is possible to trace abstractly a general table of virtues required for particular circumstances in order to help clarify the overall terrain of moral action. As with values, however, such a table

would not articulate the particulars of one's own experience nor dictate the next steps in one's project toward personal realization with others in relation to the Good. This does not mean, however, that such decisions are arbitrary; conscience makes its moral judgments in terms of real goods and real structures of values and virtues. Nevertheless through and within the breadth of these categories it is the person who must decide, and in so doing enrich his or her unique experience of the virtues. No one can act without courage and wisdom, but each exercise of these is distinctive and typically one's own. Progressively they form a personality that facilitates one's exercise of freedom as it becomes more mature and correlatively more unique. This is often expressed simply by the term more 'personal'.

A person's values reflect then, not only his culture and heritage, but within this what he has done with its set of values. One shapes and refines these values through one's personal and hence free search to realize the good with others in one's world. Hence, they reflect not only present circumstances which our forebears could not have experienced, but our free response to the challenges to interpersonal, familial and social justice and love in our days.

In the final analysis, moral development as a process of personal maturation consists in bringing my pattern of personal and social virtues into harmony with the corresponding sets of values along the vertical pole of transcendence. In this manner we achieve a coordinated pattern of personal capabilities for the realization of our unique response to the Good.

Though free and hence properly personal, as was seen above, this is done essentially with others. For this reason the harmony sought within oneself for moral development must be mirrored in a corresponding harmony between modes of action and values in the communities and nations in which persons live. (Thus, Aristotle considered his ethics of individual moral action to be an integral part of politics.) If that be true then the moral development of the person as a search for self-fulfillment is most properly the search for that dynamic harmony both within and without which is called peace.

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## Notes

1. For a psychological analysis of the person see *The Psychological Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*, ed. by Richard Knowles and George F. McLean (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), other volumes in this series are *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: Act and Agent*, ed. by George F. McLean and F. Ellrod; *Character Development in Schools and Beyond*, ed. by Kevin Ryan and Thomas Lickona; *The Social Context and Values: Perspectives of the Americas*, ed. by O. Pegoraro; *Chinese Foundations for moral Education and Character Development*, ed. by Tran van Doan; as well as Gordon Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Study* (New York: Holt, 1948) and *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961); M. Arnold and J. Gasson, *The Human Person: An Approach to an Integral Theory of Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971); R. Ruddock, ed., *Six Approaches to the Person* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1972); and J. Dagenais, *Models of Man: A Phenomenological Critique of Some Paradigms in the Human Sciences* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1972).

2. Some, notably those sensitive to environmental concerns, extend this to the need to promote the natural qualities of the land even in our use of it.



3. Adolf Trendelenburg "A Contribution to the History of the Word Person", *The Monist* 20 (1910) 336-359. This posthumously published work is now over 100 years old. See also "Persona" in *Collected Works of F. Max Muller* (London, 1912), vol. X pp. 32 and 47; and Arthur C. Danto, "Persons" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol. VI, pp. 110-114.
4. This was pointed out by Gabius Bassus. See Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* V, 7.
5. *Prosopeion*. This explanation was given by Forcellini (1688-1769), cf. Trendelenburg, p. 340.
6. C. J. De Vogel, "The Concept of Personality in Greek and Christian Thought", *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, ed. John K. Ryan (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), II, 20-60.
7. "That accepteth not the persons of princes", *Job* 3 and 4:19. See also *Deut* 10:17; *Acts* 10:34-35; *Rom* 2:10-11.
8. Cicero, *De Officiis* I, 28 and 31; *De Orator* II, 102; and Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 17.
9. A. Danto. See n. 2 above.
10. (Boston: Beacon, 1957), p. 61.
11. Rudolf Carnap, Hans Hahn, and Otto Neurath, "The Scientific World View: The Vienna Manifesto", trans. A. E. Blumberg, in *Perspectives in Reality*, eds. J. Mann and G. Kreyche (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 483.
12. R. Carnap *et al*, *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung: Der Wiener Kreis*, ch. 2, trans. A.E. Blumberg, in J. Mann and G. Kreyche, *Perspectives on Reality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), pp. 483-87.
13. Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: Citadel Press, 1956), p. 14.
14. See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper, 1959); Wilfrid Desan, *The Planetary Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).
15. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I, 4 73 a 3-b 25.
16. René Claix "La statut ontologique du concept de sujet selon le metaphysique d'Aristot. L'aporie de *Metaphy.* VII (Z) 3," *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 59 (61), 29.
17. *Metaphysics* VII 4-7.
18. William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), ch. I.
19. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 181ff.
20. Gabriel Pastrama, "Personhood and the Burgeoning of Human Life", *Thomist*, 41 (1977), 287-290.
21. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, ch. 27, n. 11 and 9-10, ed. A. C. Grasser (New York: Dover, 1959), Vol. I, 448-452. The person is "a thinking, intelligent being, that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself."
22. *Essay*, n. 17.
23. *Essay*, nn. 18 and 26.
24. *Essay*, n. 20.
25. *Essay*, n. 29.
26. G. W. Leibniz *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. II, ch. 27, 9, trans. A. G. Langley (Chicago: Open Court, 1916).
27. Locke, *Essay*, ch. 27, n. 15.
28. Leibniz, *New Essays*, II, ch. 27, n. 14. This consequence was recognized and accepted by Hume who proceeded to dispense with the notion of substance altogether.

29. *New Essays*, nn. 20-66.
30. Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, III, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), p. 80.
31. *Foundations*, III, p. 82.
32. *Foundations*, II, pp. 53-59.
33. C. J. De Vogel, 20-60.
34. T.B.L. Webster, *Greek Art and Literature, 700-530 B.C.* (London, 1959), pp. 24-45 (cited by C. De Vogel, p. 27, fn. 17a).
35. Heraclitus, fgs. 2, 8, 51, 112 and 114 (trans. by C. De Vogel).
36. Heraclitus, fg. 115 (trans. by C. De Vogel, p. 31). See also fg. 45.
37. Heraclitus, fg. 101 (trans. by C. De Vogel, p. 31).
38. Heraclitus, fg. 115 (trans. by C. De Vogel, p. 31).
39. Diog. L. VII 136; Marcus Aurelius IV 14, VI 24.
40. Plato, *Republic* 476, 509-511: *mimesis*.
41. Aristotle, *De Anima* II, 2 412 a 28-29.
42. George F. McLean "Philosophy and Technology", in *Philosophy in a Technological Culture*, ed. G. McLean (Washington: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1964), pp. 14-15. The same Heraclitean line of reasoning is reflected by recent structuralist insights regarding the need which structures have for a single coordinating principle. Inasmuch as the structure is continually undergoing transformation and being established on new and broader levels this principle must be beyond any of the contrary characteristics or concepts to be integrated within the structure. It must be unique and comprehensive in order to be able to ground and to integrate them all. Jean Piaget, *Structuralism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 139-142. Cf. also George F. McLean *Plenitude and Participation* (Madras: Univ. of Madras, 1978), pp. 12-15.
43. For a detailed consideration of the first weeks after conception and of the point at which an individual life is clearly present see Andre E. Helligers, "The Beginnings of Personhood: Medical Consideration", *The Perkins School of Theology Journal*, 27 (1973) 11-15; and C. R. Austin, "The Egg and Fertilization", in *Science Journal*, 6 [special issue] (1970).
44. Heraclitus, fg. 45.
45. Plato, *Republic* I 353 c-d; and IV 43 d-e, 435 b-c, and 441 e, 442 d.
46. *Republic* VI 609 c. See De Vogel, pp. 33-35.
47. De Vogel, pp. 38-45.
48. Different cultures, of course, are variously located along the spectrum from individualism to collectivism.
49. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 52-57 and 118; see Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Martin Heidegger* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 24-25 and 56-57.
50. H. Rousseau, "Etre et agir", *Revue Thomiste*, 54 (1954); Joseph de Finance, *Etre et agir dans la philosophie de Saint Thomas* (Rome, P.U.G., 1960).
51. Boethius, *De duabis naturis et una persona Christi*, c. 3.
52. Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), pp. 48-50; "The Person: Subject and Community", *Review of Metaphysics*, 33 (1979-80), 273-308; and "The Task of Christian Philosophy Today", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 53 (1979), 3-4.
53. Wojtyla, pp. 32-47.

54. This goes beyond Piaget's basic law that actions follow needs and continue only in relation thereto. Jean Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 6.
55. Ivor Leclerc, "The Metaphysics of the Good", *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3-5.
56. Mehta, pp. 90-91.
57. Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, p. 197.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 156.



## Chapter VII

# The Foundations of Moral Judgment

*David L. Schindler*

The central problem of philosophical ethics is whether it is possible to provide rational justification for our moral values.<sup>1</sup> This problem typically comes to expression in the form of the relation between "facts", or "what is the case", and "values" or "what ought to be the case".<sup>2</sup> The problem of course looms large in any intended program of moral education. For as the etymology of the word indicates, education involves a drawing out or leading ("*e*" and "*duco*"), and moral education thus involves some sort of drawing out or leading in the area of morality. I leave aside here the question of whether or in what sense this entails some form of indoctrination.<sup>3</sup> My concern bears rather on the nature of the substantive moral values one might wish to build into one's educational program. If and to the degree that moral values are intrinsically irrational or non-rational matters, it would seem that there can be no good reason for urging their appropriation in any such program. My question, then, is whether it is possible to affirm moral values as rational sorts of affairs. Is it possible, as a matter of principle and hence in any given instance, to distinguish rationally between moral good and evil? As this formulation of the question suggests, my intention is to consider, not which particular substantive moral judgments are to be taken rationally as good,<sup>4</sup> but rather whether and in what sense substantive moral judgments as a matter of principle might be so taken.

It is a commonplace that much of contemporary educational practice and indeed of contemporary philosophy provides us with forms of a negative answer to this question. For example, the influential values-clarification approach to moral education, as the name itself suggests, tends to focus its concern on helping a student to clarify or elucidate the values which he or she already has, rather than on trying to move to a critical judgment about the content or substance of such values.<sup>5</sup> The reason for this restriction of focus to the process of valuing rather than to the specific character of particular value judgments seems to be the assumption, adopted at least provisionally or for operational purposes, that there exists no objective, rationally justifiable, moral standard in terms of which such judgments might be assessed.<sup>6</sup> The values-clarification approach to moral education, in other words, seems to instantiate a mixture of the types of ethical theory called naturalism and non-cognitivism.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, moral values are assumed, at least provisionally, to be a simple function of the contingent facts of one's culture or psychology. On the other hand and often simultaneously, moral values are assumed, again at least provisionally, to be matters of simple preference, and thus the sorts of things about which one cannot, strictly speaking, argue. The common import of such assumptions, then, is that they serve to remove morality from the arena of argumentation and justification.

One of the overarching concerns of the studies which make up this volume is to develop a philosophy which justifies some sort of education in the area of substantive moral claims. Such a concern commits one in principle to a rejection of the relativism and non-cognitivism carried in the philosophic assumptions of values-clarification as just noted, and hence to the task of defending some kind of objective standard for morality. But I should like to suggest at the outset that even the values-clarification theorists who adopt the above assumptions cannot so easily dismiss the foundational question about an objective standard for morality, that is, even from within their own assumptions. For as values-clarification theorists themselves have increasingly come to acknowledge, however much they may disparage efforts to make--or to evaluate critically--

substantive moral claims in any direct or straightforward way, their very adoption of clarification as the "correct" mode of education carries within it, at least implicitly, an espousal of such values as tolerance, self-actualization, authenticity and the like, over their opposites.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, as Ellrod notes, the fact that values-clarification theorists increasingly acknowledge their own implied values does not mean that they have thereby justified those values.<sup>9</sup> But this serves to focus on just the point I wish to make here: namely, that if in fact the very practice of value neutrality or value-relativity in one sense (for example, in terms of whether it is good to steal in this particular instance), carries within it a non-neutrality or non-relativity in another sense (for example, in terms of whether it is good to be tolerant of different views regarding the goodness of stealing in this particular instance), then it would seem to follow that the question of the warrants or foundations of morality does in fact arise even for one who adopts the assumptions of value-neutrality or relativity.

The possibilities are twofold: (1) the values-clarification theorist can deny that he or she implies in his or her practice the "correctness" of such values as democratic tolerance and the like. In such a case there is no demand for providing a warrant for one's practice, but only because one is thereby saying that one has exactly no reason, implicit or explicit, for subjecting students to the process of clarification--rather than, say, to a shootout--and for encouraging other educators to do the same. Since it is difficult to maintain such a position if one continues to defend the practice of clarification in preference to a shoot-out, (2) the values clarification theorist increasingly acknowledges his or her implied judgment of preference for the values of democratic tolerance and the like. In acknowledging such an implied value judgment, the values-clarification theorist is committed to showing the warrants for exempting such a value from the neutrality and relativity which he or she assumes regarding values generally.

It is important that this brief suggestion not be taken in a stronger sense than is intended. For the values-clarification theorist might respond simply by saying that selecting the value, say, of democratic tolerance for preferred status has no other warrant or "reason" than the fact that it is a value which happens to be shared in the society in which we live. The value of democratic tolerance, in other words, might be taken to be nonrelative only because it is as a matter of convention taken to be such by--and for--those who live in our society, and not because there are good reasons in the strict or strong sense for taking it, reasons, that is, which could be defended as binding in a cross-cultural or indeed universal sense. My initial suggestion, then, is only that, insofar as the practice of values-clarification implicitly involves taking exception in some form to the values clarificationist's professed value-neutrality, there is an internal demand for one who engages that practice to give some accounting for the exception.

On the one hand this should not, *a priori*, be taken to signify a demand that such accounting be made in terms of good reasons which hold trans-culturally or universally, for that would beg the question of whether there are such--a possibility which the values-clarificationist, in offering conventionalism as a response, precisely rejects. On the other hand, and this is the point of my initial suggestion, the demand for an accounting does seem to me to commit the values-clarificationist *a priori* to considering all the logically possible ways of explaining the exception involved in his or her performance. One cannot simply or *a priori* assume that the conventionalist response is the only, or indeed the most adequate, way of accounting for the exception, for this would also beg the question, now from the other direction: given some elements of non-neutrality and nonrelativity carried in any performance of values-clarification, the issue which demands adjudication is precisely that of the sort of "reasons" which suffice finally to account for these elements. That conventionalism is the most adequate explanation available must therefore be

argued in light of other possibilities, notably the possibility that there are "natural" reasons or foundations for non-neutrality and non-relativity.

This demand for argument, then, sets both the context and limits of the present article. My purpose will be to show (a) that there is a basic philosophical claim which is operative in the conventionalist account of morality and indeed serves precisely to dictate that account, and to show (b) that there is available an alternative, contrary philosophical claim which makes possible a "natural"<sup>10</sup> account of morality. My purpose, in other words, will be to show the logical possibility of a morality which is natural rather than merely conventional, and thereby to establish the gratuity of the claim that conventionalism is the only possible, and hence most adequate, response to the question of morality.

Among contemporary moral education theorists Lawrence Kohlberg has stood out as one who rejects the claim that we can adequately account for morality in conventionalist terms. He claims that good reasons, that is, reasons which bind cross-culturally or universally, can be given for our conception of morality and thus for our moral judgments. In a word, Kohlberg challenges the non-cognitivism and relativism operative in much of contemporary ethical theory. He does this in the name of a kind of "naturalistic" morality, that is, a morality which has a "natural" and hence both cognitive and universal foundation. Such a position is consistent with the intention of this chapter which therefore will proceed by examining the position of Kohlberg, both in terms of the criticisms he makes of contemporary trends in ethical theory, and in terms of the warrants he provides for his own alternative theory. The purpose of the chapter in so doing will be threefold: it will attempt to distill what I take to be the central philosophical claim operative in the intention of his argument, a successful defense of which is consequently necessary to sustain that argument. Secondly, it will attempt to show that this (implicit) philosophical position is in an important way in tension with the (Kantian/formalist) philosophical tradition on which he explicitly relies for support for his theory. Finally, the chapter will suggest that there is available another philosophical tradition (Aristotelian-Thomistic) which makes just the sort of claim which seems to me to be necessary to allow Kohlberg to realize the intention of his argument. The overarching aim, then, in engaging this threefold task, will be both to call attention to the (assumed) philosophical position which has dictated the rise of non-cognitivism and relativism, and to show the logical possibility of an alternative philosophical position which makes possible a view of morality which is both cognitive and normative.

## I

There is no need to rehearse the details of Kohlberg's stages of moral development. The major point relevant to our topic is Kohlberg's claim that these developmental stages translate into a moral hierarchy, that is, his claim to "have successfully defined the ethically optimal end point of moral development."<sup>11</sup> Our concern bears on the warrants which Kohlberg provides for such a claim, and this concern leads us into consideration of what is called the "naturalistic fallacy".<sup>12</sup>

Stated broadly, the naturalistic fallacy is taken to consist in the claim to have established ethical conclusions beginning from factual premises. Or, to put it in the terms used at the outset of this article, the naturalistic fallacy as ordinarily understood consists in making values, or what ought to be the case, a function simply of facts, or what is the case. I have already noted above the assumptions connected with this fallacy in much of contemporary social science. On the one hand, insofar as contemporary social science subscribes to the mode of reasoning reflected in the naturalistic fallacy as stated, that science collapses into relativism. If it is not possible to make any

distinction between facts and moral value, then a factual variety of moral values from person to person and culture to culture implies a relativism of moral value. On the other hand, insofar as contemporary social science rejects this position of naturalism, it typically does so by separating moral values from facts. That is, moral values are not taken to be matters of fact at all, but rather matters of preference. Strictly speaking, then, values are no longer taken to be relative, but only because they are not the sorts of things about which one can argue whether they are absolute or relative. Values, in short, are not cognitive matters at all. The upshot of these assumptions, then, as we have seen, is that values are either relative or cognitively meaningless. In either case, they are not susceptible of rational justification. Kohlberg claims to have developed a theory which warrants rejection of these assumptions. In order to see how and indeed whether his theory does so we turn to an examination of Kohlberg's position in relation to naturalism.

Kohlberg gives a summary statement of that position as follows:

To begin with, there are two forms of the 'naturalistic fallacy' we are not committing. The first is that of deriving moral judgments from psychological cognitive-predictive judgments or pleasure-pain statements, as is done by naturalistic notions of moral judgment. Our analysis of moral judgment does not assume that moral judgments are really something else, but insists that they are prescriptive and *sui generis*. The second naturalistic fallacy we are not committing is that of assuming that morality or moral maturity is part of man's biological nature, or that the biologically older is the better. The third form of the 'naturalistic fallacy' which we are committing is that of asserting that any conception of what moral judgment ought to be must rest on an adequate conception of what it is (*FITO*, p. 222).

The second form of ethical naturalism which Kohlberg is rejecting here is rather straightforward, and for our purposes can be disposed of quickly. For the kind of moral development Kohlberg suggests is not identified with growth in biological maturity. It is simply not the case that, as one becomes older, one necessarily moves to higher stages of moral reasoning. The move from stage to stage is a logical, not a biological sequence. Of course it is true that an ethically higher stage must come later, but this is precisely because it is ethically higher or more adequate; it is not ethically higher because it comes later (*FITO*, p. 181). In short, for Kohlberg it is philosophic adequacy, and ontogenesis, which determines moral hierarchy (*FITO*, p. 181).<sup>113</sup> There are therefore two forms of naturalism with which we must concern ourselves here: the first one noted above, which Kohlberg rejects, and the third one, which he embraces. Why does Kohlberg reject the first and accept the third?

Kohlberg's criticism of the first or bad form of naturalism consists in pointing out what he takes to be a series of confusions among contemporary social scientists which locks them into this bad form. The first confusion is that between ethical and cultural relativism. The cultural relativist affirms that "moral principles are culturally variable in a fundamental way" (*FITO*, p. 156). The ethical relativist makes the further claim that such divergence is logically unavoidable, that is, that there are not rational principles and methods which could reconcile observed divergencies of moral beliefs" (*FITO*, p. 156). Stated in a positive form, then, the confusion is between the notion that everyone has his or her own values and the notion that everyone ought to have his or her own values (*FITO*, p. 156). Stated in negative form, the confusion is manifest in the "move from 'There are no universal human values' to 'There ought not to be any universal human values', every person



or culture ought to do his thing." (*FITO*, p. 158) Kohlberg argues that such a move commits the naturalistic fallacy by identifying a factual judgment with a value judgment. More specifically, the collapsing of cultural relativism into ethical relativism involves an ignoring of what is called the "open question": granted that person or culture "x" values "y", we can sensibly ask, "But is that good?" or "Is it right?" To deny the legitimacy of this further question would be to continue to assert the very assumption for which some warrant is being sought.<sup>14</sup>

The second confusion which leads to a fallacious and relativistic form of naturalism is that between "ethical relativity" and "ethical tolerance", that is, between "the relativity of moral principles" and "the relativity of blaming or punishing persons or groups who do not act in accordance with those principles" (*FITO*, p. 159). The claim here, in other words, is that, to avoid sitting in judgment on others and assuming moral superiority for ourselves, we must accept an equality of moral principles, which is to say we must deny that there are any universal moral principles. Kohlberg's response to this position is twofold: first, the universal moral principles of obligation do not oblige one to blame the persons who deviate from these principles; and, secondly, the very urging of the principle of tolerance as applying to all human beings itself entails a denial of ethical relativity, for the principle itself is affirmed thereby as non-relative.

In short, then, Kohlberg rejects a kind of reverse of the "naturalistic fallacy" just discussed: namely, that wherein an "ought" (value) of tolerance, linked with an "is" (fact) of cultural relativism, generates ethical relativism. The "ought" of tolerance is assumed (falsely) to require an identification of ethical relativism and cultural relativism.

The third fallacy behind much of contemporary social-scientific thinking has been its "confusion of ethical relativism with 'value neutrality' or 'scientific impartiality'" (*FITO*, p. 161). Kohlberg cites as an example here the claim of Berkowitz that it is neutral to define moral values as "evaluations of actions generally believed by members of a given society to be either 'right' or 'wrong'" (*FITO*, p. 161). Kohlberg's response is that this is not neutral because it prejudices the facts. To put it another way, it fails to distinguish between "an *a priori* definition of morality in terms of cultural relativity, and the conclusion that morality is culturally relative" (*FITO*, p. 161). The point here is that Berkowitz's definition is not necessarily wrong but that, because it involves a theory which is adopted in advance of inquiry and hence informs the inquiry, it is not a neutral approach. On what grounds, for example, other than *a priori* definition, does Berkowitz rule out as an adequate understanding of moral value that of the Catholic priest who defines it in terms of belief in the catechism (*FITO*, p. 162)? In short, the point here is, once again, not that Berkowitz is wrong, but merely that he is not being value-neutral, that he is arbitrarily ruling out of court alternative understandings of morality, and that their thus being ruled out requires justification.

Furthermore, suppose a similar strategy were employed with respect to scientific beliefs. That is, suppose that scientific beliefs were defined as "beliefs about the world generally believed by members of a given society to be true or false" (*FITO*, p. 161). This would entail that we accept as equally "scientific" the most sophisticated forms of scientific theory and the crudest imaginable forms of superstition. But this simply belies what we do as scientists. We would recognize one who equalized matters in this fashion simply to be a poor scientist. Hence, argues Kohlberg contra Berkowitz, we must at least consider the possibility that the same situation obtains in the moral sphere (*FITO*, p. 161). A simply *a priori* rejection of this possibility will not suffice.

Kohlberg contends that Berkowitz's position derives from the view of men like Weber "who distinguish between a rational sphere of social-science methods and findings ('is'), and a sphere of value ('ought'), toward which a rational man or a scientist must take a stance of 'value neutrality,'

that is, recognize that his position is personal, arbitrary, and historically conditioned" (*FITO*, p. 162). Hence we are led to a fourth confusion, namely, that "between the 'rational' as 'the scientific or factual' and the 'rational' as the value neutral." (*FITO*, p. 162). Kohlberg argues that this position once again assumes ethical relativity rather than justifies it. On what grounds does one rule out the possibility of establishing rational methods of coming to ethical agreement without a critical assessment of those methods? Indeed, Weber himself is taking a value stand in defense of the value of value-neutrality, and in doing so he attempts to support it with careful rational arguments. The point here, then, is twofold: first, the rejection of rational arguments in the area of ethical value should not be assumed, as it is in the case of men like Berkowitz and Weber; rather such rejection demands a justification. Secondly, the defense of neutrality exemplified in Berkowitz and Weber itself involves taking a value stance, and doing so by an, at least implicit, appeal to the kind of rational argumentation they have already ruled out in such a context (*FITO*, p. 162).

What is common to these confusions then, which are linked with the first form of the naturalistic fallacy, is the assumption that moral judgment, as distinct from factual judgments finally have no cognitive status. Rational methods or modes of rational argumentation are identified with what is understood to be scientific method. The latter is limited to description of the facts of valuing among different persons or cultures. Since these facts of valuing are seen to vary, they are, given the assumed identification of the rational (hence "objective") with the scientific/descriptive, labelled mere preference, that is, something of a noncognitive sort.

Kohlberg's criticism of this form of naturalism, which makes moral valuing simply derivative from and finally reducible to psychological fact, is that at least as operative in much of the thinking of contemporary social scientists, it is advanced not as a conclusion, but rather is asserted in the form of *a priori* assumption. There is no justification for assuming in advance of any inquiry into the matter that we cannot find moral development of a genuinely hierarchical sort, and that it is impossible in principle for moral thinkers to come to agreement regarding moral matters on the basis of rational argumentation (*FITO*, p. 163). This assumption by social scientists is belied by their practice, which would seem both to instantiate some sort of ethical non-relativity and non-neutrality, and to carry at least an implicit appeal to some sort of rational argumentation on their behalf.

Kohlberg's criticism of the dominant form of naturalism then, is similar in many ways to the criticism I sketched at the outset of this article in relation to values-clarification. But his criticism would be incomplete and indeed innocuous without a second, more positive claim: namely, that careful empirical inquiry suggests findings which contradict the assumption of relativism built into the prevalent fallacious form of naturalism (*FITO*, pp. 163ff). As this suggests, Kohlberg at once understands himself to be involved in a form of naturalism, and claims that his form is of a sort which justifies non-relativism. This position claims both to involve a description of the facts of moral development, and that this very description in turn allows a prescription in terms of a hierarchy of kinds of moral judgment. Consideration of how Kohlberg advances this claim will situate us properly to begin reflection on the philosophical issue(s) which I take to be involved in the defense of his claim.

## II

If Kohlberg is to be successful in his claim to offer a distinct alternative to the form of naturalism which he considers defective in its assumed relativism, then it seems he must, on his

own terms, meet two requirements. First, he must show that moral judgments have some internal connection with facts in the ordinary sense, in order to be able to sustain the third or benign sort of naturalism which would seem necessary to maintain the cognitive status of moral judgments. Secondly, he must show that moral judgments at the same time are in some sense distinct from facts in the ordinary sense, in order to elude the (first or fallacious) sort of naturalism which would collapse moral judgments into relativism. How does he manage to walk this tight-rope?

To begin with, Kohlberg claims that empirical studies of moral development disclose as a matter of scientific fact that "there is a universal moral justice" (*FITO*, p. 223; see also pp. 163-180). It is important to be clear about the nature of this claim. This moral form about which Kohlberg intends to be making a factual claim assumes a distinction between fact and value. As Kohlberg puts it, and this is the second crucial element in his position, "the moral man assumes that his moral judgment is based on conformity to an ideal norm, not on conformity to fact" (*FITO*, p. 223). In other words, the form of naturalism to which Kohlberg thinks it necessary for any moralist to subscribe requires that judgments about what morality ought to be must begin with some characterization of what it is (*FITO*, pp. 222-223). If we attend carefully to the nature of morality as revealed in cross cultural studies, however, we find that in the minds of moral men morality is something distinct from what is taken to be fact in the ordinary sense. Moral men in various cultures consider their moral judgments to be founded on conformity to an ideal, rather than on conformity to facts, in the sense of what happens to be the case in their culture. To put it another way, moral men in various cultures consider what they ought to do in any given instance to be logically distinct from the empirical fact of their (or their culture's) doing it. Even if what one judges ought to be done coincides with what one does, empirical cross cultural studies of the facts of moral experience reveal that the moral man does not found his sense of obligation on fact in this sense. Rather, they show that the moral man experiences his moral judgment as prescriptive on its own terms, that is, precisely as distinct from his or his culture's psychological facts in the ordinary sense.

These two elements in Kohlberg's position, then, lead us to affirm the following regarding his understanding of the relation between facts and moral judgments (see *FITO*, p. 223). On the one hand, moral judgments are *sui generis*; hence what is ordinarily understood to be a scientific description of the facts can never justify them or pronounce on their worth. On the other hand, such a description of the facts does play an integral role in that it can tell us whether this distinctive concept of moral judgments accurately obtains. In other words, the claim that "x" is what morality is in the minds of moral men is a factual claim of the usual sort which can be tested through empirical study: morality either is this in the minds of moral men, or it is not. Only empirical qualitative observation of various cultures can determine this. But, secondly, the qualitative dimension of the claim made on behalf of one's conception of morality precisely as normative involves a mode of reflection distinct from empirical observation. Disclosure of what moral men do consider to be an adequate conception of morality leaves us in the domain of facts in the ordinary sense. That men do as a matter of fact claim that "x" is an adequate conception of morality is logically distinct from whether they ought to. The latter claim, therefore, requires a distinct justification.

The following quotations from three of Kohlberg's studies will I think serve to summarize both how he understands the relationship between fact and morality and how he justifies that understanding.

(The) isomorphism of psychological and normative theory generates the claim that a psychologically more advanced stage of moral judgment is more morally adequate, by moral-philosophic criteria. The isomorphism assumption is a two-way street. While moral philosophical criteria of adequacy of moral judgment help define a standard of psychological adequacy or advance, the study of psychological advance feeds back and clarifies these criteria. Our psychological theory as to what individuals move from one stage to the next is grounded on a moral philosophical theory which specifies that the later stage is morally better or more adequate than the earlier stage. Our psychological theory claims that individuals prefer the highest stage of reasoning they comprehend. This claim of our psychological theory derives from a philosophical claim that a later stage is "objectively" preferable or more adequate by certain moral criteria. This philosophical claim, however, would for us be thrown into question if the facts of moral advance were inconsistent with its psychological implications.<sup>15</sup>

However, we do hold a stronger position, claiming that while psychological theory and normative ethical theory are not reducible to each other, the two enterprises are isomorphic or parallel. . . . [We] have argued for a parallelism between a theory of psychological development and a formalistic moral theory on the ground that the formal psychological developmental criteria of differentiation and integration of structural equilibrium, map into the formal moral criteria of prescriptiveness and universality. If the parallelism were correct in detail, then formalist philosophers could incorporate an equilibrium concept as part of their normative ethical theory, and vice versa. The ultimate result would be a theory of rational moral judgment like that now present in economics, in which the theory of how people ought to make economic decisions and the way they do make decisions are very closely linked. What can warrant such a "parallelist" claim is only the fruitfulness of its results. I have argued that the fruitfulness of the parallelist assumption is revealed in the clear success of the psychological work based on it (*FITO*, pp. 224-5).

Epistemological and ethical principles guide psychological inquiry from the start. Thus, the strategy attempts to avoid the naturalistic fallacy of directly deriving judgments of value from judgments about the facts of development, although it assumes that the two may be systematically related. It takes as an hypothesis for empirical confirmation or refutation that development is a movement toward greater epistemological or ethical adequacy as defined by philosophic principles of adequacy (*DAE*, p. 484).

### III

Let us move on, then, to our foundational question: given that Kohlberg's conception of the relation of psychology and morality is one of isomorphism, namely, that the criteria of moral development parallel the criteria of psychological development, what is his warrant for this conception? What warrants his adoption of these criteria of moral development, precisely as moral. If I have accurately described Kohlberg's position, there are three elements in the answer to this question: (1) Kohlberg assumes his principles of moral adequacy (prescriptiveness and universality) to be established on distinctly philosophical grounds, that is, in the context of a reliance on "the formalistic tradition in philosophic ethics from Kant to Rawls."<sup>16</sup> (2) He then uses this distinctly philosophic assumption interactionally, or hypothetically, in relation to the facts of psychological development. That is, empirical study of the facts of psychology will either confirm or refute this original assumption. (3) Finally, Kohlberg claims that empirical study does confirm

the original assumption. Hence his conclusion: the originally assumed and distinctly moral-philosophic criteria are justified.

The point I wish to introduce here is that this answer of Kohlberg seems to harbor an unresolved tension, and hence to need further unpacking. On the one hand, Kohlberg says that moral principles, precisely in their character as moral, must be justified on distinctly philosophical grounds, which he takes to be provided by the formalistic tradition stemming from Kant. In other words, the adequacy of these principles as moral is not dependent upon empirical inquiry. On the other hand, operating as a psychologist, Kohlberg takes over this philosophic justification, which then functions as a hypothesis subject to empirical confirmation or refutation. The second part of his argument thus seems to be that empirical studies play an intrinsic or internal role in determining what are finally to count as adequate moral principles. There results the following tension: namely, that morality is at once independent of facts and dependent upon facts.

Now it seems to me clear that some such position as this is necessary if one is to meet squarely the problem posed by the dominant forms of contemporary ethical theory. If morality is simply a function of facts in the ordinary sense relativism would seem to ensue; if morality is simply not a function of facts non-cognitivism tends to result. Kohlberg's intention is to elude these alternatives by--correctly in my judgment--entering a qualification. In one sense morality is a function of the facts, while in another sense it is not. But this serves to focus exactly the point I wish to make, namely, that, given his intention, the task incumbent upon Kohlberg is just that of justifying the sense of his proposed qualification, as the precise sense in which he takes morality to be at once internally related to facts and distinct from facts.

This statement of the task incumbent upon Kohlberg requires still further precision, for a third form of ethical theory, called non-naturalism<sup>17</sup> has received support in recent thought, at least among philosophers. I take this theory to involve a threefold claim: first, that moral judgments are cognitive matters (in contrast to non-cognitivism); secondly, that moral judgments are nonetheless not cognitive matters of the ordinary sort, that is, the sort of factual matters which can be verified by empirical observation (in contrast to naturalism); and thirdly, that moral judgments are cognitive matters which involve a special sort of cognition, typically called something like "intuition" or "rational insight". Clearly, the whole weight of Kohlberg's argument is in agreement with non-naturalism in the first sense. My concern here bears on what the line of Kohlberg's argument entails in terms of its being situated relative to the second and third features of non-naturalism.

As we have seen, Kohlberg is explicit in his intention to embrace a form of naturalism, that is, to overcome a dichotomy between "is" and "ought" (*FITO*, pp. 154-55). He considers it possible, precisely within the context of this intention, to defend the claim that moral judgment possesses a distinctly necessary and categorical, and hence a normative, character. It seems clear, therefore, that Kohlberg is in agreement with nonnaturalism in ascribing to moral judgment a categorical or normative character. Nonetheless, at the same time he differs from non-naturalism regarding the possibility of defending such an understanding of moral judgment in "naturalistic" terms, that is, in terms of "what is" or "fact". In short, Kohlberg, in agreement with non-naturalism, is committed to defending the distinct categorical or normative character of morality. But, in contrast to non-naturalism, Kohlberg is committed at the same time to defending such a distinct character in terms of an internal or intrinsic connection with facts.

What I wish to suggest here then, is that Kohlberg's ethical theory, in sharing simultaneously the concerns of both naturalism and non-naturalism, is thereby distinct from either (as they are commonly understood). To put it more broadly in light of what I have written above, the theory

which Kohlberg advances is an alternative to all three of the dominant forms of ethical theory. If I have correctly identified the central thrust of his theory vis-a-vis those dominant forms, then the philosophical task to which he is committed is that of justifying that/how morality is at once a fact, in contrast to non-cognitivism and non-naturalism, and a fact of a distinct sort, in contrast to naturalism of the usual variety. In a word, Kohlberg must justify the distinctness of morality precisely as a kind of fact.

In the face of this suggestion regarding the central philosophical claim to which the intention of Kohlberg's argument seems to commit him, my concern in what follows will be to make a threefold argument. First, I shall attempt to show that there has been in the tradition of Western modernity a common understanding of fact which has served to generate the three dominant contemporary forms of ethical theory. Secondly, I shall argue that the philosophical tradition on which Kohlberg expressly relies, namely the Kantian, does not break from this common understanding in a way which is sufficiently radical to provide a foundation for Kohlberg's intention of offering a distinct alternative to these dominant forms of ethical theory. Finally, I shall attempt to show that there is available another philosophical tradition, namely the Aristotelian-Thomistic, which does contain resources for breaking from that common understanding of fact in a way which is sufficiently radical to found the distinct alternative which Kohlberg intends.

#### IV

First of all, then, as Kenneth Schmitz notes apropos of a contemporary dictionary account (*Oxford English Dictionary*, "Fact", n. 4) of "fact",

[t]he term designates a real occurrence ("actually the case"); it is "a datum of experience;" and it is what is "certainly known." This complex meaning of fact has been shaped within the problematic of human cognition, with attention to how realities can be known. It points, therefore, not only to the matter of evidence, to what is there, but also to the human conditions required to certify it. . . . In sum, then, the term "fact" has for its foreground, focus and surface what is actually the case, the evidence; but that evidence comes forward from a background of selective attention guided by an implicit understanding of what is significant for a distinctive kind of discourse. To speak of what is there as given fact is to speak within the circle of a discourse that directs attention to the matter insofar as the matter is capable of satisfying conditions that are determined a priori and in accordance with the demands of objective method.<sup>18</sup>

In this light I suggest that the salient features of the understanding of "fact" which set the context of the contemporary discussion regarding the nature of morality can be captured in what Schmitz terms an "objectification of nature".<sup>19</sup> That is, a fact is typically taken to be whatever can be gotten at in terms of the external criteria of verification.<sup>20</sup> Such criteria involve an understanding of fact (nature) which can properly be termed at once mechanist, objectivist, and empiricist. Though there are of course numerous different ways in which these features come to expression in the thought of Western philosophers in recent centuries, the meaning I wish to ascribe to them can be indicated by turning first to Descartes.

Descartes, whom one might identify as a *locus classicus* for the distinctly modern understanding of fact, was certainly no empiricist. Nonetheless, his influence was decisive in terms

of the development of what I wish to call mechanism and objectivism.<sup>21</sup> That is, he adopts as his criteria for what can be affirmed as true--"real"--what can be gotten at clearly and distinctly. This, in turn, must be accessible in terms of the proportions and relations proper to mathematics (geometry),<sup>22</sup> which is to say external spatial relations. And such relations are exactly the sort of relations which are proper to a machine.

Descartes' criteria for truth (what is to count as "real") do not really get transformed in the empiricist tradition. In other words, the empiricist tradition does not so much challenge Descartes' criteria as restrict the scope of their applicability to what is accessible to the senses. One need only refer here to Hume, who proceeds to give an account of fact ("matters of fact") exhaustively in terms of cause and effect, by which he means the external relations of discrete sense impressions or phenomena.<sup>23</sup> Hume cites as the perfect instance of the relation of cause and effect that of a billiard ball at rest which is then struck by another and thereby acquires a motion.<sup>24</sup>

I do not at all intend to suggest with these brief remarks that the differences between Descartes and Hume are either few or unimportant, or in turn that there are not numerous ways of understanding fact (nature) in modernity which are in significant senses different from either Descartes or Hume. At the same time I do mean to suggest that in what one may call the tradition of Western modernity there has been a common assumption regarding the meaning of fact which is well illustrated by the central claims of Descartes and Hume as just noted.<sup>25</sup> That assumption is that reality or what is to count as real is what can be accounted for in terms of external (spatial) relations. The paradigm of causal activity is taken to be locomotion, or motion understood in terms of the displacement of physical bodies.<sup>26</sup> I call such an understanding of fact (nature) objectivist and mechanist. It is objectivist because it considers nature in terms of how it appears from without, and thus proceeds to give an account of the activities of nature in terms of the external influence of one thing on another (cf. Hume's billiard ball example). It is mechanist because external relations are best exemplified in, most proper to, the external behavior of machines. While Descartes represents a dualist variety of this mechanism and objectivism, Hume illustrates the empiricist variety which has been more common in the Anglo-American tradition. In a word then, I take the dominant understanding in the modern Anglo-American tradition to be one wherein what counts as a fact (nature) is what is both observable and sufficient to account for motion in the sense of the displacement of physical bodies.<sup>27</sup> In the language of the classical philosophical tradition, the causal activity of things is understood exhaustively in terms of a truncated view of efficient causality, to the exclusion of formal and final causes. Our question, then, is how this common Anglo-American empiricist variety of mechanism and objectivism shapes the problem of the relation between fact and morality.

The answer to this question lies simply in calling attention to the three results of excluding the formalizing and finalizing activities of an entity as proper causes. I suggest that those results, pertinent to the problem of the relation of fact and morality, are three. The removal of necessity in the sense meant here stems from the denial of form as a structural feature of each of the entities which make up nature. By form is meant that act of an entity in virtue of which it is identified as an entity of this or that kind. Form therefore is that which universalizes any given entity in the precise etymological sense ("universe": "turning toward one") of serving to unify or make into one the many aspects of an entity. The removal of form as an internal feature of what we mean by fact entails the elimination of the sort of necessity (necessary structural feature) of any given entity which would make it possible to universalize or make universal statements about that entity.

Secondly, the modern understanding of fact (nature) as described removes finalizing (or teleological) activity as a cause of an entity. By finalizing activity I mean that dynamic activity

whereby an entity tends or seeks to be what it is. Finality is form in its dynamic, directional, purposive modality. The significance of such an exclusion of finality is suggested when we note the connection between finality or teleology and value. Whatever additional features we may wish to assign to what we mean by value,<sup>28</sup> a minimal and essential feature is value's connection with this tendency or seeking which we term finality or teleology. Since fact or nature (any given entity) becomes a value in itself or inherently valuable insofar as it is the object of its own finalizing activity, modernity's exclusion of finality from fact or nature makes it impossible to speak of any entities having intrinsic value, that is, value precisely in their character as fact or nature.

Thirdly, in understanding fact (nature) in terms of the external influence of one entity on another, modernity excludes form and finality as internal causes of an entity. In other words, modernity excludes any internal activity whereby that entity shapes itself and its environment in terms of its own immanent structure. As a result, insofar as modernity might wish to recoup the sort of necessity lost in its denial of form, it must do so in terms of forces outside any given entity. Thus, necessity becomes necessity of a deterministic sort. What an entity is, is not determined in any sense from within; it is in no sense self-determined. Rather what an entity is, is what is done to it, the sum of the forces acting upon it from without.

In sum, the dominant understanding of fact in modernity carries within it: (1) an inability to make universal statements about any of the entities which make up nature; (2) an inability to speak of the value of such entities in their character as factual or natural; and finally (3) an inability to speak of necessity with respect to such entities in anything but a deterministic way. For the problem of the relation of fact and morality this implies that one must break with the modern understanding of fact or nature if one wishes to speak of morality as both a matter of fact or nature and as requiring features such as universality, value, and non-determinism.<sup>29</sup>

But let me be clear about the nature of this suggestion. I have made no claim as to what might count as an argument against the modern understanding of fact, or in favor of some other alternative which would incorporate the features I have noted as missing in the modern understanding. Nor do I mean to suggest that the sort of universality, value and non-determinism one might seek for morality need be, or is, simply the same as that sought for fact or nature generally. My point is simply that, if one wishes to affirm morality at once both as a fact and as requiring the features of universality, value, and non-determinism, then one must assign some universality, value, and non-determinism to what one means by fact.

To put it another way, if one continues to accept the modern understanding of fact, one must conceive morality in terms of the following alternatives. On the one hand, if one wishes to take morality as a kind of fact, one must understand morality as a non-necessary non-universal, and hence as a contingent and relative, matter. Any sense of value or obligation one might wish to assign to morality could be assigned only contingently and relatively. On the other hand, if one wishes to take morality as something universal, then, once again given the modern understanding of fact, one must understand morality not to be a matter of fact or nature. Any sense of value (teleology) or obligation (deontology) one might wish to assign morality could thus be found only outside fact or nature. In a word, given the modern understanding of fact or nature, the following dilemma arises: if naturalism (of the sort described by Kohlberg), then relativism; if non-relativism, then non-naturalism.<sup>30</sup>



## V

The point of the above excursus into modern philosophy's understanding of fact or nature has been to show how such an understanding dictates the rise of relativistic and non-naturalistic views of morality. My concern has been to show that, if one wishes to be neither a moral relativist nor a non-naturalist, that is, to be both a naturalist and a non-relativist, one must challenge just so far the modern understanding of fact or nature. The burden of my earlier argument with respect to Kohlberg was that such an intention of non-relativism and naturalism is fundamental to his undertaking. My question now is whether the Kantian tradition on which he expressly relies for philosophical support is able to help him successfully to carry out that intention. More precisely in light of the above discussion, my question is whether the Kantian tradition breaks with the modern understanding of fact in a way which would permit Kohlberg to found the universality and obligatoriness (deontology) of morality in nature as Kohlberg must do if he is to sustain his naturalistic intention.

My answer is that Kantian tradition does not do so, for a reason contained in the very starting point of Kant's philosophy. That starting point consists in an assumption and a question, to wit: given the Humean understanding of fact or nature, how can we rescue the sort of necessity required for an adequate view of both science and (in a different way) morality?<sup>31</sup> Obviously the Humean context of the question shapes the direction of Kant's answer to this question: for in so far as the objects of nature do not, in accord with Hume's analysis, yield any features which are universal and hence necessary in the strict sense,<sup>32</sup> such universality and necessity must be sought elsewhere than in these objects of nature in themselves. For Kant this "elsewhere" is in the human mind. In a word, then, Kant begins by accepting the Humean claim that nature has no necessity "in itself," and this in turn leads him to locate necessity in, and found it upon, the structure of the human mind which is something quite different from nature.

Further, while locating necessity in the human mind and in this way distancing himself from Hume, Kant nonetheless continues in a fundamental sense the mechanism of Hume. In other words, though now the causality proper to motion in the sense of the displacement of physical bodies (cf. Hume's billiard ball model) has necessity in the strict sense due to the structure of the mind, it nonetheless is still causality precisely in this mechanical sense. It is still the causality proper to external spatial relations. In a word, the study of nature for Kant does deliver necessity (due to the structure of the mind), but the necessity is nonetheless still characterized by external succession.<sup>33</sup> Given this mechanistic (if now idealistic) understanding of nature, there follow the sorts of consequences noted in a general way earlier: namely, any purposiveness (teleology) or obligation (deontology) one might be inclined to affirm must be located by Kant outside nature.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, however much one might understand the objects of nature as having some purposiveness or finality, the point is for Kant that one can legitimately so understand them only as if they had such. To affirm finality as constitutive of nature in the same way as mechanical or efficient causality is constitutive of nature is precisely to go beyond what has been established as the limit of reason in its natural or empirical employment. In a word, insofar as one wishes to employ reason in a teleological sense, one can do so only insofar as one understands such employment to be merely regulative, rather than constitutive, of our knowledge of nature.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, the sort of necessity required by the "ought" of morality demands a kind of causality different from that of nature. The "ought" of morality demands freedom, which is "the power of a state beginning spontaneously",<sup>36</sup> and this sort of spontaneity runs counter to the situation of nature wherein one state of nature at any given moment follows of necessity from an immediately

preceding state. In a word, the spontaneity and hence lack of determinism required by the kind of necessity proper to morality demands the positing of an order of freedom, which is other than the order of nature whose necessity is of a mechanical and hence deterministic sort.<sup>37</sup>

The point of these brief considerations, then, is to suggest how Kant's understanding of the place of teleology and deontology (the "ought" of morality) in his system is a function of his assumed mechanistic understanding of nature. I say assumed because, in his starting point, Kant does not challenge but rather takes over Hume's mechanism. It is not a question for Kant of challenging the billiard ball model of causation; rather, having assumed that model as sufficient for the (constitutive) understanding of nature, the problem for Kant becomes one of finding a way of inserting a stronger sense of necessity into that model of causation than is provided by Hume. Of course, in locating necessity exclusively in the mind, Kant thereby affirms a dichotomy or dualism of nature and mind. But the mechanical character of that necessity in turn forces the two further dualisms which are directly pertinent to our concern. Given the mechanical character of the necessity of reason in its constitutive or natural employment, teleology and deontology--though in different ways--must *ipso facto* be extrinsic to reason in its natural employment. This means that, on a Kantian understanding of the matter, it is impossible to have any "natural" conception of morality (which involves teleology and/or deontology). There simply can be no intrinsic relation between the judgments of reason in its natural employment and the judgments of reason in its moral employment. In a word, a Kantian conception of morality is essentially non-naturalistic.

The implication of this for the argument of Kohlberg is clear: insofar as Kohlberg wishes to realize his intention of a naturalistic morality, he cannot rely on the Kantian tradition for his philosophic justification of that morality. The dilemma is this: if his conception of morality is naturalistic, then it must be non-Kantian; whereas if his conception of morality is Kantian, it just so far must be non-naturalistic. In other words, the Kantian position forces exactly the disjunction between nature ("is") and morality ("ought") which Kohlberg's naturalistic intention commits him to overcoming. In this sense, then, and for this reason, Kohlberg cannot seek the foundations for his conception of morality in Kant.

## VI

The overarching concern of this article requires that we press this Kantian issue further. Granted that Kohlberg faces a dilemma insofar as he tries to defend a naturalistic morality from within a Kantian perspective, why does he not resolve the dilemma simply by abandoning his naturalism? In other words, are there compelling reasons for Kohlberg's remaining a naturalist? It seems to me that there are, and that those reasons are two. First of all, as Kohlberg's research illustrates, people ordinarily do take morality to be connected with what we mean by fact or nature generally. When we defend our conception of morality, whatever the detail of that conception, it would seem that we finally make the claim, at least implicitly, that our conception of morality is adequate because "that is the way things are," or again because such a conception "fits the facts." Insofar as we claim that "x" is the most adequate conception of morality, that "x" therefore is what our conception of morality ought to be, it would seem that we mean to say, at least implicitly, that such a conception is warranted finally because that is the way morality is.

The issue raised here is of course profoundly difficult and delicate. For it is clearly the case that we can and do use terms such as "is", "facts", "the way things are" in different senses. Indeed the use of such terms in the context of morality provides an example of such a difference: though I use some such common phrases as "the fact is" in saying both that "the fact is that I ought to do

`x'", and "the fact is that I do `x'", it seems clear that I mean something different in each case. Nonetheless this example serves to focus just the point I wish to make: namely that the meaning of "the fact is" in the two cases is not exhausted in the intention of difference. Rather, it seems to me, and the research of Kohlberg points to the same conclusion, that we mean what we say when we use the one phrase in both cases, and that there is thus (at least implicitly) some common/one meaning of fact which is simultaneous with, immanent within, the two distinct meanings of the term as used in the two cases. Insofar as one fails to allude to this commonness or oneness within the difference, insofar that is, as one attends only to the difference, one is just so far guilty of an equivocation which removes the warrant for continued use of that one term.

In short then, it seems to me, that the possibilities are two: on the one hand, we mean something equivocal when we speak of "fact" or "is" in the context of morality as distinct from the context of "nature". But if this is the case, then we should be able to find a way finally of justifying our conceptions of morality without appealing (at least implicitly) to some such common/one term as "fact" or "is" which we ordinarily use with respect to "nature". But Kohlberg's research shows, and indeed I believe our reflection bears out, that we do constantly--unavoidably--find ourselves making such an appeal. Insofar as this is the case, it becomes incumbent upon us to retrieve some sense of the unity of the meaning of "fact" ("is") within its distinctness as used apropos of nature and morality. This task of discovering some sense of unity between nature and morality commits one to the intention of naturalism. Nonetheless, it bears stressing that such an intention does not entail a rejection of the distinctness between nature and morality which is the concern of non-naturalism. The above criticism of Kant was not that he defended a difference between nature and morality, but that he defended a difference between the two in a way which neglected, which failed adequately to thematize, any unity between them. Kant thereby collapsed into a dualism which is inadequate, given the above argument regarding the implication of the way we use language.

A second reason for not abandoning some sense of naturalism at least in principle as a way out of the above dilemma is the lesson of history. Though it is impossible to rehearse the whole of modern and contemporary history relative to our problem,<sup>38</sup> it seems to suggest that a rejection of naturalism, a removal of morality from any anchoring in "facts" or "nature", leads almost inevitably--because it has in fact so led--to a non-cognitivist view of morality. However much one might want to defend the normative character of morality in non-naturalistic terms, that is, in terms which are different from what we ordinarily mean by "is" or "fact" or "nature", the lesson of history is that such an attempt inevitably gives way to the charge of gratuitousness. If morality is not accessible to us in the way in which "facts"--"reality"--generally are accessible to us, then it becomes increasingly difficult to claim that morality is "really" accessible to us at all. To the degree in which we wish to defend morality as something different from "facts" or "reality" in the ordinary sense, it becomes difficult to say that morality is nonetheless still cognitively meaningful. It seems to me that certain strains of both positivism and existentialism (though in different ways) provide eloquent testimony in support of this point.

## VII

For these two reasons, it seems that for Kohlberg the way out of the dilemma posed by his reliance on the Kantian tradition is not to abandon naturalism, but rather to abandon the Kantian tradition. More precisely, it is to seek a form of ethical theory which permits one to protect the distinctly normative or categorical character of morality, which is Kant's concern, but which does so while rejecting Kant's dichotomy between nature and morality which makes it impossible to

meet the intention of naturalism. The burden of my argument above was that Kant's dualism of nature and morality was a function of his failing to challenge sufficiently radically the mechanism of Hume. Granted that Hume's nature receives in Kant a necessary character due to the structure of the mind, this necessity is exactly the necessity illustrated best by the operations of a machine. That is, the state of nature at any given instant is understood exhaustively in terms of the external influence of one state upon another. In a word, nature is viewed deterministically and as without purposiveness. It follows that, insofar as one wishes to insert into morality a distinctly purposive or teleological character,<sup>39</sup> or the deontological sort of necessity which requires freedom, one must seek the source of that teleology and deontology in something other than nature. In sum then, my contention has been that it is Kant's mechanistic understanding of nature which compels his dualistic understanding of the relation between nature and morality. If this is true, it follows that a necessary condition for overcoming a Kantian sort of dualism is to challenge that mechanistic understanding of nature.

It is just here then, that it seems to me, that the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical tradition is well equipped to help us. Of course there are different interpretations of that tradition in terms of the issue before us. Nonetheless, there is no need to engage here a discussion of the relative adequacy of these different interpretations. Rather, given the line of my argument thus far, it will suffice to show simply that the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition can be shown to possess the kind of non-mechanistic view of nature needed to move beyond the dilemma of either a naturalistic relativism or a non-naturalistic dualism. Indeed, within this context, my intention is to show how that tradition must be interpreted if it is successfully to meet the necessary systematic conditions outlined above for overcoming that dilemma. My task, then, will be to show, first, how the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition challenges a mechanistic understanding of nature, and secondly, how that tradition situates morality within a nature the mechanistic understanding of which has been so challenged.

The sense in which the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition can be understood to challenge a mechanistic understanding of nature becomes readily apparent upon recall of our earlier description of mechanism. Very simply, the mechanistic view removes from nature the internal causes of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, namely, form and finality. Consequently the states or activities of nature are understood exhaustively in terms of the effective influence from without of one entity or group of entities upon another. Successful understanding of any given natural entity thus hinges on understanding the forces outside that entity, given which that entity is (does) what it is (does). Successful understanding of an entity, in other words, requires no appeal to any internal activity of an entity whereby that entity actively determines itself to be what it is, or actively shapes its environment in terms of what it is determining itself to be. In short, nature as so understood is both without any inherent purposiveness and, insofar as it has necessity at all, that necessity can only be of a deterministic sort. The appropriate method for the study of nature so understood is the external one of empirical observation and verification.

Against the background of this mechanistic way of viewing things, then, the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition affirms three basic metaphysical axioms of agency or effectivity, formality, and finality.<sup>40</sup> To begin with, these axioms are properly metaphysical, which means that they apply not simply to entities of this or that kind, but to all entities or instances of being, including those which make up what we call nature.<sup>41</sup> But insofar as principles of agency, formality, and finality are operative in nature, the Thomist is committed to an inherently purposive and non-deterministic view of nature. Nature retains a sort of necessity due to the presence of form in the entities which make up nature, but the necessity is now seen as a dynamic one: what an entity is at any given

instant is what that entity is actively shaping itself to be, in relation to the other entities which make up its environment. In a word, then, the three causes of agency, formality, and finality, understood as jointly present in any given natural entity, require a threefold affirmation. (a) Natural entities, possessing these internal causal activities, can no longer be properly understood in a deterministic way, that is, in terms of effective influence upon such entities from without. (b) Natural entities, possessing form, retain a mark of necessity and hence of universality: their activity is always of a specific sort. (c) Natural entities, possessing finality, always act in a way which bears a teleological character. Thus, if it is the case that, as I have argued above, a conception of morality which would be naturalistic, that is rooted in nature, requires a view wherein it is possible to speak of nature as bearing the features of universality, value, and spontaneity (non-determinism), I suggest that such a condition is met in the Thomistic understanding as here outlined. But of course realization of this condition, while necessary if morality is to be understood as natural, does not suffice if morality is taken at the same time to be in some sense distinct from nature. How then does Thomism meet this second or sufficient condition, which is the central concern of non-naturalism?

First of all, the causes which are operative in nature generally are for the Thomist operative also in human nature. It is simply the case now that those causes are given a human specificity due to the presence of a distinctly human form. That specificity we may call a rationality whose hallmark is self-consciousness. Thus a human being, like a natural being generally, is a locus of intelligible necessities which is at once dynamic and purposive. But as self-conscious, a human being is active and purposive in a distinct way which we call free. In other words, the non-determinism found in nature generally becomes in human nature, due to the presence of self-consciousness, the self-determination which is properly termed freedom.<sup>42</sup> In a word, just as all natural beings actively seek an end or what is called good, so do humans, though humans do so consciously and freely. This assertion does not yet suffice to characterize human activity as moral: granted that humans do and indeed must act in this manner, does this warrant our saying that they ought to do so? Even granted that human activity is essentially or naturally characterized by an active seeking of the good, is there anything in such a claim that warrants our saying that humans therefore ought to seek the good?

To ask this question is to enter into a controversy which has plagued Thomistic ethical theory.<sup>43</sup> Relative to that controversy, it will suffice for my purposes to record an interpretation which I take to be both logically possible in terms of the texts of Aquinas, and satisfactory in terms of meeting the systematic requirements for an adequate conception of morality as those requirements have been outlined above. This interpretation makes two claims, which bear on Aquinas' statements that "the first principle of practical reason is one founded on the notion of the good, viz., that good is that which all things seek after," and that the primary precept of law is that "good is to be done and pursued and evil is to be avoided".<sup>44</sup> My twofold claim is simply that, while the truth contained in the first statement is the necessary condition for the note of obligatoriness contained in the second statement, that truth does not suffice to account for the note of obligatoriness.

On the one hand, then: were it not characteristic of human nature actively to seek the good, humans would not experience the obligation to do so, certainly not in any universal way. Human nature, in the sense of its active tendencies, is an inner condition of, and thus provides a necessary foundation for, morality. This is precisely what I take Aquinas to mean when he says that the first principle of practical reason is "founded upon (emphasis mine) the notion of good, viz., that good is that which all things seek after."

At the same time, this interpretation does not seem to entail the further claim that the judgment regarding human tendencies suffices to account for the note of obligation contained in the primary precept of law, which is to say, the first principle of morality. Indeed, that seems to me why Aquinas says that the principle which includes the note of obligatoriness "Good is to be done and pursued" (*faciendum et prosequendum*) is the first principle, which is to say a *per se notum* or self-evident principle of morality. The note of obligatoriness, or "ought," sounded first by Aquinas when he moves to the moral order establishes that order as moral. But if this is the case, then it follows that that note of obligatoriness is not reached simply by unpacking or reading off one's human tendencies. My awareness that I ought to seek the good is given immediately with, that is, as a distinct moment within, my tendency to seek the good; such awareness thus does not follow upon, in the sense of being inferred from, that tendency.

In sum, then, Aquinas says that the first principle of morality is founded upon man's natural tendencies. I take this to mean that such tendencies are the necessary foundation for morality: did we not have a tendency to seek the good, we would not experience an obligation to do so. On the other hand, Aquinas adds a distinct note of obligatoriness when he formulates the principle which he takes to be the first principle of morality. I take this to mean that there is a primitive experience of obligation which establishes human activity as moral: however much attention to our basic inclinations may disclose to us that we do seek the good (and indeed disclose the nature of the various goods we seek), the experience that we ought to seek the good (various goods) is given immediately with, and hence not inferred from, the awareness that we do seek the good.

The key to interpreting Aquinas correctly here and to summarizing the importance of his position relative to our earlier argument lies in recognizing that there is for Aquinas a primitive experience of the *deon* (being obligated) as well as the *on*(being). The use of such language to describe Aquinas' position seems to me both proper and instructive. It suggests that we have experiences of both "ought" and "is" which are irreducibly distinct (because given primitively), but which are nonetheless distinct within or as modalities of nature (*on*: being, what is). Insofar as this is the case, it seems to me, apropos of my earlier argument, that Aquinas is neither a naturalist nor a non-naturalist of the usual sort: the "ought" of morality is intrinsically related to (because a distinct modality of) the "is" of nature; but the "ought" of morality is at the same time irreducibly distinct from (because not inferred and hence not following from) the "is" of nature. Such a position, in cutting through the dilemma of either naturalism or non-naturalism, meets exactly, I suggest, the intention of Kohlberg's argument vis-a-vis contemporary ethical theories. In so doing it meets also the intention of this chapter.

## VIII

In concluding, I think it is important to retrieve the main lines of my argument, and in so doing to focus once again what I take to be its scope. I began by noting that any program of moral education which intended to lead students in the area of substantive moral judgments was committed to rejecting a relativist or non-cognitivist view of morality. My further suggestion was that even those, for example the values-clarificationists, who claimed in theory not to be leading students in the area of substantive moral judgments belied such a theory in their practice: their practice seemed in fact to involve a non-neutrality and non-relativity regarding (say) democratic tolerance. My intention with regard to the values clarificationists, then, was to illustrate that even those who would most explicitly espouse value-neutrality and relativity thus could not successfully carry through such a position. My intention was thus to suggest that even would-be relativists and

non-cognitivists must face up to the task of foundations, that is, of giving some accounting for the non-relativity which, however much they deny it in theory, they exercise in practice. Further, then, in this context my contention was that the conventionalist and hence relativist account which might be offered in support of their practice of non-relativity was precisely an account whose adequacies could not be assumed, but which required argument.

The demand for an argument from the conventionalist would be trivial were there not available, at least as a logical possibility, an account of morality which was not conventionalist. This led to what has been the burden of the chapter: to show that there is available such a logically possible alternative account of the foundations of moral value, one which might be properly termed a "natural" account. Since Lawrence Kohlberg has stood out among contemporary moral theorists as one who espouses the sort of "natural" account necessary to meet the challenge of conventionalism, my argument was worked out in relation to that of Kohlberg.

The substance of the argument then, at once in relation to conventionalism and Kohlberg, was to show how the modern Western understanding of fact had shaped the contemporary discussion concerning ethical theory. Specifically, my argument was that the modern understanding of fact or nature could be properly termed mechanistic, and that such mechanism was precisely what served to dictate the alternative ethical theories of naturalism and non-naturalism. On the one hand, insofar as morality is taken to be a matter of fact, morality just so far--that is, given the modern (e.g., Humean) understanding of fact--can only be a contingent and hence relative matter. Thus there results naturalism of the relativistic sort as described by Kohlberg. On the other hand, insofar as morality is taken to be non-relativistic, morality just so far--once again given the modern understanding of fact--can only be a non-factual matter. In other words, there results a non-naturalism which is characterized by a dualism of fact or nature and morality. The burden of my argument then, was to show that, because it was mechanism that dictated the alternatives of naturalism (of the relativistic sort) and non-naturalism, a challenge to mechanism was the necessary (though not the sufficient) condition for moving beyond these alternatives. In a word, my effort was to show that, insofar as one wished one's ethical theory to be neither relativist nor dualist, one must defend just so far some sort of non-mechanistic view of nature.

Within this context, the argument was twofold: (1) It was my contention that Kant accepted, in a fundamental way, the mechanistic understanding of fact and hence was forced, in seeking a distinctly normative conception of morality, to found it upon something outside fact or nature. In other words, Kant was seen to illustrate the second or non-naturalistic alternative noted above. My contention consequently was thus, that Kohlberg, insofar as he relied on the Kantian tradition for justification of his ethical theory, was just so far forced into a non-naturalism which belied his intention of naturalism, that is, of rooting his ethical theory in fact or nature. (2) Secondly, I suggested in this context that there was available another philosophical tradition, namely, the Aristotelian-Thomistic, which did in fact challenge the mechanistic understanding of fact of modernity, and which in so doing founded a possible way out of the impasse regarding ethical theory (that is, either relativistic naturalism or dualistic non-naturalism) dictated by that mechanistic understanding.

It is important to be clear about the scope of the argument as recapitulated here. I have not argued the preferability of a non-mechanistic understanding of fact or nature, such as that found in the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical tradition, over against the mechanistic understanding of modernity. The intention of this article is met in showing how one's assumptions regarding the meaning of fact or nature, that is, whether fact or nature is to be conceived mechanistically or non-mechanistically, bear upon one's ethical theory. If the argument has been sound, it follows that

anyone who would defend the ethical theories of naturalism, non-cognitivism, and non-naturalism, all of which presuppose a mechanism, must provide an argument showing why such presupposed mechanism is to be preferred to non-mechanism as a way of understanding fact or nature. In view of the opening considerations of this article, this task is incumbent upon values clarificationists just so far as they wish to make anything other than a gratuitous claim upon others on behalf of their conventionalist ethical theory.

On the other hand, it follows that anyone who would defend an alternative to these three dominant forms of ethical theory, that is, who would defend an ethical theory which purports to be at once cognitive, non-relativistic, and natural, must provide an argument showing why non-mechanism is to be preferred to mechanism as an understanding of fact or nature. I would stress here, then, in light of my considerations of Kohlberg, that Kohlberg must either undertake this task, in order to maintain his intention of providing a distinct alternative to the three dominant forms of ethical theory; or he must be prepared to defend the mechanism which I have argued underpins Kantian ethical theory, and in so doing embrace non-naturalism.

Finally, then, I have suggested that an argument on behalf of non-mechanism is contained in principle in the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical tradition. Nonetheless I would stress that my suggestion was only that: My brief sketch of the central features of that tradition as it bears upon the problem of fact and morality requires fuller development, both in terms of its adequacy as an interpretation of that tradition, and in properly systematic terms.

Apropos of the requirement for such a fuller development, I must be content here in conclusion with re-focusing the precise issue I take to need an argument. The mechanistic understanding of fact consists essentially in considering things as they appear from without, that is, in their externality. Such an understanding involves both a content and a method. In accord with a method of observation and verification the mechanistic approach proceeds to give an account of things in terms of a truncated view of efficient causality (of effective influence from without). An argument on behalf of a non-mechanistic understanding of fact therefore must consist in justifying that/how things act also from within. Such justification must attend to both content and method. The idea of causality must be expanded to include internal causes (e.g., form and finality), and a method appropriate for the inclusion of such internal causes, that is, a method distinct from the objectivist method of observation and verification, must be worked out. In sum, then, if the argument developed in this article is sound, the need for such a justification of a non-mechanistic understanding of nature must be met, if not in the suggested Aristotelian-Thomistic terms then in some other. Otherwise, I submit, we are necessarily left in the contemporary impasse regarding ethical theory which consists in having to choose between relativism, non-cognitivism, and dualism.

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## Notes

1. Alan Gewirth, *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. ix.
2. W. D. Hudson, "Editor's Introduction: The 'is-ought' problem", in *The Is-Ought Question*, ed. by W. D. Hudson (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 11.
3. See Ch. X below.
4. Apropos of this issue, see Ch. IX above.



5. See the works by Sidney Simon, Howard Kirschenbaum and others, cited by Frederick Ellrod in nn. 1-2 in Ch. I above. Ellrod offers a brief description and assessment of the values clarification theory on pp. 10-19 of his article.

6. Cf. Ellrod, *Ibid.*, p. 7 and pp. 4-17, *passim*.

7. For a description of naturalism and non-cognitivism, see Richard B. Brandt, *Ethical Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959), pp. 151-153, and Ch. 7 and 9.

8. Ellrod, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11; p. 14.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

10. I use the term "natural" here in the sense of something which holds universally. The connection between "natural" and "naturalist" is of course a matter which is a major concern of this chapter.

11. Lawrence Kohlberg, "From Is to Ought: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away With It in the Study of Moral Development", in *Cognitive Development and Epistemology*, ed. by Theodore Mischel (New York: Academic Press, 1971), pp. 151-235, at p. 153. (Hereafter cited as *FITO*.)

12. It has been denied that the "naturalist fallacy" is in fact correctly termed a fallacy at all, and claimed that it is rather simply a mistake or at best but a species of the definist fallacy. See, for example, James M. Giarelli, "Lawrence Kohlberg and G. E. Moore on the Naturalistic Fallacy", *Educational Theory*, 26 (1976), 352. This distinction does not materially affect the line of argument taken in this paper.

13. Cf. also Lawrence Kohlberg and Rochelle Mayer, "Development as the Aim of Education", *Harvard Educational Review*, 42 (1972), 483. (Hereafter cited as *DAE*).

14. Cf. also in this context Kohlberg's rejection of what he terms "the psychologists's fallacy" and defines as follows: "the direct derivation of statements about what human nature, human values, and human desires ought to be from psychological statements about what they are." Kohlberg subjects this fallacy to the same criticism noted here, namely, that it ignores the "open question" of why a given fact of desiring or valuing should be called good. See *DAE*, pp. 466-67.

15. Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Development and Moral Philosophy", *The Journal of Philosophy*, LXX (1973), p. 633.

16. *Ibid.*

17. On naturalism, non-cognitivism and non-naturalism as the three prevalent forms of ethical theory, and for a brief description of each, see Richard B. Brandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-153, and Chs. 7-9.

18. Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982), pp. 40-41.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Clearly Descartes is responsible in an important way for the turn to the subject characteristic of Western modernity. My point is simply that the criteria of knowledge which Descartes employs in his turn to the subject are criteria proper to objects. It is in just this sense that I take him to be objectivist.

22. Cf. *inter alia*, *Discourse on Method*, Part II, in: *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Vol. I (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 92-93.

23. Cf. for example, Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section IV Part I, and *passim* (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1955); see also, "An Abstract of a Treatise on

Human Nature", *loc. cit.*, pp. 183-198; and the "Appendix to the Treatise on Human Nature", in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Vol. II (London; New York; E. P. Dutton & Co., 1952), esp. pp. 317-320.

24. "An Abstract", pp. 186-187.

25. Cf. in connection with this claim: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), esp. Chs. 1-7; and Schmitz, *op. cit.*, II, III, IV.

26. Schmitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-21.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

28. On the additional features required for an adequate conception of value, see my "Whitehead's Inability to Affirm a Universe of Value", *Process Studies*, 13 (Spring 1983), 117-131, especially the remarks regarding the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition in footnote 2.

29. My principle concern in this article is of course the foundation of the universality of morality as normative, and hence obligatory. For the sense in which this universal obligatory character involves a concern for value, or the good, see John Farrelly's "The Human Good and Moral Choice" in this volume. For the sense in which the universal obligatory character of morality presupposes non-determinism, or more precisely freedom, see my discussion of Kant which follows and ch. IV above.

30. There is of course a third possibility here, namely non-cognitivism, which holds that morality is, strictly speaking, neither relative nor non-relative, precisely because it is cognitively meaningless. In terms of the argument of the paper, this collapses into the two possibilities noted. For, on the one hand, non-cognitivism is often mixed with naturalism in the thinking of social scientists; and, on the other hand, insofar as non-cognitivism is strictly adhered to, it embraces a dualism of fact and morality which, as dualistic, is similar to non-naturalism in the sense pertinent to my argument.

31. Cf. especially in this connection Kant's Introduction to his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, edited by Paul Carus (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1933); see also the Preface to the Second Edition and Introduction, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965). (Hereafter *CPR*).

32. Cf. e.g., *CPR*, p. 44.

33. Cf. e.g., *CPR*, p. 464.

34. Of course Kant himself does not ascribe a teleological character to morality. My point in what follows is simply that, insofar as he is concerned to find a place anywhere in his system for teleology, that place must be outside nature (in a constitutive sense). My further point, then, is that anyone who, in disagreement with Kant, might wish to ascribe to morality a teleological character must nonetheless, like Kant, locate that character outside nature if nature is interpreted in Kant's mechanical sense.

35. *CPR*, pp. 549-570, esp. pp. 560-61.

36. *CPR*, p. 464.

37. *CPR*, pp. 464-479, esp. pp. 464f and 472f.

38. See in this connection MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, *loc. cit.*

39. See n. 34.

40. Cf. Schmitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19 and 96-130. For the sense in which these metaphysical axioms bespeak a radical activity or energy (*energeia*) rooted in *esse*, which is act in the fundamental sense in Thomism, see especially the remarks by Schmitz on pp. 117f. For the sense in which these axioms bespeak an activity or energy (*energeia*) in Aristotle, see James P. Etzweiler, "Being as Activity in Aristotle: A Process Interpretation", *International*

*Philosophical Quarterly*, XVIII (1978), 311-334, and Frederick E. Ellrod's response "Energeia and Process in Aristotle", *IPQ*, XXII (1982), 175-181. In what follows I am concerned principally with the Thomistic formulation of the issue relative to the problem of a mechanistic understanding of nature.

41. For studies pertinent to this claim see Schmitz, *op. cit.*, and "Immateriality Past and Present", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, (1978), 1-15; my "David Bohm on Contemporary Physics and the Overcoming of Fragmentation", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, XXII (1982), 315-327, and my "Whitehead's Inability to Affirm a Universe of Value", cited in n. 28.

42. For the purposes of this paper, I simply abstract from the question whether, or in what sense, beings other than humans might be properly affirmed to be conscious. It suffices for the purposes of my paper to affirm that all beings including human beings are active and purposive, but that human beings are nonetheless active and purposive in a distinct way (a way which is called self-conscious and free).

43. See in this connection the following works: Germain Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2", *Natural Law Forum*, 10 (1965), 168-201; John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Ralph McInerny, "The Principles of Natural Law", *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 25 (1980), 1-15; John Finnis and Germain Grisez, "The Basic Principles of Natural Law: Reply to Ralph McInerny", *American Journal of Jurisprudence*, 26 (1981), 21-31.

44. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2.



## Chapter VIII

# The Human Good and Moral Choice

*John Farrelly, O.S.B.*

One basic issue that contemporary reflection on moral development and moral education raises is that of form versus content in morality. Is morality primarily a kind of human judgment that has formal criteria such as universality and prescriptiveness (e.g., principles of justice should be impartially applied to all)? If so, then moral education is a movement toward such judgments. Or is morality a matter primarily of creative life decisions guided by intelligence for certain goals such as self-actualization, usefulness, efficiency or beneficial consequences for the individual and society? If so, then moral education is a matter of helping young people toward this kind of action and decision. The division between a view of morality that can be called formalist and deontological (from the Greek word *deon*, duty) and a view that can be called content oriented and teleological (from the Greek word *telos*, goal) is perhaps the basic division among influential normative ethicists today. The view that one takes on this question affects one's interpretation of moral development and moral education.

The present chapter examines this question within the context of our whole project and the limits of the space available here. The question itself has in part been clarified by previous chapters of this book that examined contrasting views on moral education, and it will be further clarified as we proceed in this chapter. Some of the implications of these diverse viewpoints for an interpretation of moral development and of moral education will be apparent as we proceed; others will be analyzed at length in later chapters and volumes of this project. We shall examine this question through contrasting Kohlberg's interpretation of morality, which he himself and others say is formalist, with Brenda Munsey's and Israela Aron's interpretations that are teleological and claim support from John Dewey. At this point of the chapter our purpose is not to adjudicate the critiques each interpreter makes of the other or to explain the differences thoroughly--this can be found in the references that I will cite--but rather to give a rough sense of the contrast. Secondly, we will present a third interpretation of morality which, we suggest, brings us beyond the impasse in which the first two are mired while preserving the valid insights of each of them. Thirdly, we shall discuss briefly different types of values to fill out at least part of the content of the view we propose.

### **Contrast Between Formalist and Teleological Interpretations of Morality**

As Kohlberg's philosophical position has been outlined in the first chapter of this book by Frederick Ellrod, we need not repeat that here. To recall briefly what is most relevant to the concerns of this chapter, we may begin by noting that Kohlberg takes a method somewhat similar to that of Jean Piaget.<sup>1</sup> He saw the cognitive structure basic to modern scientific thinking as consisting in the formation and testing of hypotheses. Hence, in his study of the development of knowledge or genetic epistemology he examined the stages of interaction between the epistemological or knowing subject and the environment through which this structure emerged in the subject in early adolescence.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Kohlberg has a view on what constitutes the moral judgment as such, and he examines the stages of interaction between the growing person and his or her social environment through which this structure emerges. Thus what is basic for Kohlberg

is the moral judgment rather than moral action. This judgment is not so much an assertion about what is or is not, but rather a way of structuring human behavior. As he writes:

In our view the basic referent of the term "moral" is a type of judgment or a type of decision-making process, not a type of behavior, emotion or social institution. Second, note that stage 6 is a deontological theory of morality. The three primary modes of moral judgment, and the corresponding types of ethical theory, deal with (a) duties and rights (deontological), (b) ultimate aims or ends (teleological), and (c) personal worth or virtue (theory of approbation). Our claims of superiority, then, are claims for the superiority of stage 6 judgments of duties and rights (or of justice) over other systems of judgments of duties and rights. We make no direct claim about the ultimate aims of men, about the good life, or about other problems which a teleological theory must handle. These are problems beyond the scope of the sphere of morality or moral principles, which we define as principles of choice for resolving conflicts of obligations.<sup>3</sup>

Kohlberg then is defining "morality in terms of the formal character of a moral judgment, method, or point of view, rather than in terms of its content."<sup>4</sup>

A moral judgment is distinct from an aesthetic or a prudential judgment. It is a prescriptive judgment, for it involves a structuring of human behavior that is not simply hypothetical but has a note of obligation or "oughtness" to it. It also has a universality and reciprocity, for it is a judgment such that all persons should make in similar circumstances. These characteristics are found particularly in judgments about rights and duties, or about justice:

In one sense, justice is itself content-free; that is, it merely prescribes that principles should be impartially applied to all. However, we have also argued that the stage 6 form implies justice as equity, that is, as a treatment of persons as morally equal. . . . Second, we have argued that it also implies commutative justice as reciprocity, contract, and trust . . . no principle other than justice has been shown to meet the formal conception of a universal prescriptive principle.<sup>5</sup>

Note that while Kohlberg as moral theoretician adopts a formalist interpretation, as practitioner of moral education he searches for ways of structuring the social environment of the growing child and the child's participation in that environment so that moral judgments will generate content.<sup>6</sup>

The only alternative interpretations of morality of which Kohlberg is aware are those which equate morality with the particular system of the interpreter or those which say that morality is relative. Neither of these seems to him philosophically justified, while his own empirical findings support his view that children's growth is toward that precise kind of moral judgment that he considers as constituting morality.

As a contrasting philosophical interpretation of moral development and moral education, we may call upon two recent critics of Kohlberg who claim Dewey as the source of their own views. Brenda Munsey studies the metaethical issues raised by moral development.<sup>7</sup> While Kohlberg holds an ethical rule theory, she proposes an ethical act theory. Ethical rule theory presupposes that moral rules are necessary to justify individual moral judgments, and so it holds that one cannot even identify the morally relevant facts without moral rules. Ethical act theory holds that one can

identify the relevant particular facts without such rules. For the latter view, ethical rules have an importance as summaries of inherited wisdom, but they are subject to exceptions. They are not, as ethical rule theory holds, constitutive of what it means to reason morally, for on such a basis they cannot admit of exception. Such exception then would not be moral reasoning but some other type of reasoning. Kohlberg's "stage 6 justice defines moral justification. The stage 6 structure is taken to be an *a priori* criterion for distinguishing justified moral judgments from unjustified moral judgments--there are no exceptions."<sup>8</sup>

For act theorists such as Dewey, particular moral disputes are based on particular factual disputes; and particular moral claims are justified by appeal to particular factual considerations. A pragmatic metaethics would suggest that we begin by showing the first stage of moral judgment that researchers are able to identify, and then map the changes that occur in reference to this structure. This approach assumes that a definition of morality is in principle *a posteriori*, while Kohlberg's "hypothesis about the *a priori* structure of sound moral judgment is treated as an *a priori* hypothesis, defended in terms of merely formal criteria and presumably subject to merely formal counter-arguments."<sup>9</sup>

Israella Aron, another critic of Kohlberg,<sup>10</sup> acknowledges that there are advantages to Kohlberg's formalist position in that he claims to be stimulating moral growth rather than indoctrinating or inculcating particular values. Formalist philosophers, however, restrict themselves largely to metaethics and thus do not deal effectively with substantive issues, while in moral education the teacher is trying to help young people face complex experiences and learn how to make creative moral decisions among the alternatives available. Kohlberg's dilemmas, Aron holds, are too pat and have too little data to be of much service here. For example, in the question whether Heinz should steal the drug necessary for his wife's recovery or allow his wife to die, other alternatives (e.g., taking out a loan, seeking public assistance, organizing a protest against the druggist, etc.) are not considered. Such dilemmas, abstracted from life and oversimplified, may contribute to the formalists' desire to preserve the autonomy of moral discourse, but they are not a tool to help students think creatively or explore new possibilities. Kohlberg's approach is more concerned with the justification of decisions than with the process of decision making itself, while the educator seeks to help the student toward making decisions in real life.

Thus there is need for supplementing Kohlberg's approach with one that deals primarily with the process of ethical decision making. Specifically, Aron suggests that Dewey's work is helpful here. For Dewey, it is the interaction of organism and environment that is the context both for experience and for decision making. The need for decision usually occurs when the habitual response is no longer adequate, perhaps because it no longer fulfills a person's desires or because there are conflicting desires. This situation leads to a suspension of action and to reflection and deliberation. Practical deliberation in this condition of felt conflict in a concrete situation begins with the formulation of the issue; it involves "a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing lines of action."<sup>11</sup>

The competing lines of action cannot, according to Dewey, be evaluated by an *a priori* or abstract standard (such as an ultimate principle), but must be assessed in terms of their consequences. These consequences must be construed broadly . . . . Moreover, the consequences of an act include the effects it will have on the character of the deliberator as well as its effects on the physical and social environment.<sup>12</sup>

Principles of the past are indeed important here, although not as absolutes but as summaries of wisdom that are themselves subject to modification. When a final decision is made, it is made

not so much by the deliberator knowing intellectually the correctness of his decision as by his feeling the appropriateness of a particular choice from the harmony and unity that it brings. In applying this method for the moral education of children, what is important is giving them practice in deliberation. They may be given actual situations or situations based on fictional or hypothetical case materials, but with enough sufficient data that they can envisage alternatives.

While there is much help in this approach, Aron acknowledges limitations in Dewey's ethical theory. This theory, for example, seems to endorse a highly individualistic morality because it deals with issues that are concrete and it makes moral choice depend, not simply or perhaps primarily on rational considerations, but "on direct emotional perception".<sup>13</sup> Secondly, there is a degree of relativism in Dewey's position, but he holds that values are not simply a matter of opinion and that there are rational ways of evaluating them through the consideration of consequences (on this see Chapter VI above). Thirdly, "Dewey's denial of the prescriptive power of moral judgments seems to be the most troublesome aspect of his ethical theory."<sup>14</sup> But Aron asks, in defense of Dewey's viewpoint, the following question. If one presents the consequences of a line of action that a friend is contemplating and shows that they are harmful, then what can be added by saying that the line of action is immoral? This may add persuasion, but it is essentially a rhetorical addition and not an additional argument. Aron concludes by encouraging educators to adopt an eclectic approach that would include even Plato, Aristotle, and the existentialists, along with Dewey and Kohlberg.

Kohlberg and his associates are not without response to the above critiques.<sup>15</sup> However, for our purposes here it is not necessary to pursue this debate further. We have wished to present the opposition between an ethical theory that is formalist and deontological and an ethical theory that is teleological and content-oriented: Kohlberg, Munsey and Aron have shown us just such an opposition. This takes us to the core of this chapter and its question: Is there some valid way in which we can move beyond this opposition?

### **Toward an Integration of Form and Content in Moral Theory**

We can see that each of the proponents of the moral theories outlined above is defending something of importance in moral activity. Kohlberg is defending the prescriptive and universal character of moral judgments in a way that is, he hopes, beyond relativism. Munsey and Aron are defending the character of moral judgments as creative decisions for some self-defined human good in a complex human and changing environment. What each is defending seems to be part of our moral experience. And yet prescriptiveness and universality seem to be defended in a way that abstains from assertion about the human good or goal, and creative decision making seems to be defended in a way that excludes the prescriptiveness characteristic of moral judgments. The defense of one aspect of our moral experience seems to put in jeopardy the defense of another aspect of that same experience. Part of the appeal of each position lies in the weakness of the other or in the human experience that the other position does not account for; in that sense, they feed off one another.

Why should it be necessary that one aspect of our moral experience be defended at the expense of the other? Is it due to the nature of the case, or is it due to something possibly faulty in each of these positions, some premise that they have in common from which a dilemma arises that results in a parting of the ways? I suggest that the latter is the case, and in defending such a position I am in accord with the hopes expressed by Kohlberg, Munsey and Aron that their dialogue will lead beyond their present impasse.<sup>16</sup> To support another viewpoint, I would like to present (1) an



hypothesis about the basis of morality that helps to integrate the above views and account for the divergence between them (2) a brief phenomenology that supports this interpretation of morality and of the moral judgment (e.g., that I should respect certain values or that in these circumstances I should concretely do this or that), and (3) an objection to this position that is common today and a suggested answer to it. I should note that this articulation of the position I am suggesting and my defense of it will be apparent only at the end of these three sections. In the first section, I am primarily sketching this viewpoint as an hypothesis. It is particularly in the second section that an elaboration of this position and argument for it is offered. But these sections must be completed by a consideration of, and answer to, objections some moralists base on human creativity and diversity.

It may forestall certain misunderstandings if I first make several notes on the character of the argument I am presenting. Initially in the hypothesis and later in the brief phenomenology I present the view that the context in which people act and judge morally is not only the consequences of the act being considered or an equilibration process of moral judgments progressively more universal, but what can be called the constitutive human good and the subject's orientation to this. The subject acknowledges that the act at stake is morally incumbent upon him or her because what is involved is an integral dimension of the constitutive human good and the subject's orientation to this as integral to his or her identity.

Some philosophers may consider this argument as an instance of the naturalistic fallacy, since I may appear to be drawing moral ought from what empirically is. I would see the argument as different from this. Moral theory--and viewpoints on the naturalistic fallacy are elements of moral theory--is secondary to moral experience: to be good theory it must explain the moral experience. Thus if we can agree on a phenomenology of moral experience, then there is some basis for us to evaluate moral theories--namely, on their ability to explain what is happening in moral experience. Moral theory is not prescriptive in the sense that it stipulates, antecedent to moral experience, what will be accepted as such.

As a matter of fact, there is a sense in which people generally do deduce moral obligations from facts. As Clifford Geertz, a cultural anthropologist, notes:

What all sacred symbols assert is that the good for man is to live realistically; where they differ is in the vision of reality they construct. Probably the overwhelming majority of mankind are continually drawing normative conclusions from factual premises (and factual conclusions from normative premises, for the relation between ethos and world view is circular) despite refined, and in their own terms impeccable, reflection by professional philosophers on the `naturalistic fallacy.'<sup>17</sup>

The reason many contemporary philosophers have difficulty in accepting this may be that they attempt to explain it within the context of either an empiricist or a Kantian epistemology (or some descendent therefrom), both of which are too restrictive to be able to explain this moral experience adequately. The present book's treatment of how we establish the moral "ought" is found in Chapter IX to which I would refer the reader.<sup>18</sup>

A final preliminary clarification concerns the use of the terms "good" and "value". By common dictionary definition "value" designates an amount considered to be a suitable equivalent for something else (e.g., fair price or return for goods or services) . . . monetary or material worth . . . worth in usefulness or importance to the possessor; utility or merit . . . a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the word initially reflects the estimate of the one who values something. By extension we speak of his values, her values, our values, and their values. The word "good" today seems to have a more objective meaning initially. It signifies:

having positive or desirable qualities; not bad or poor . . . serving the end desired; suitable; serviceable: a good outdoor paint . . . not spoiled or ruined; able to be used: The milk is still good . . . in excellent condition; whole; sound: a good tooth . . . superior to the average: a good student.<sup>20</sup>

Our view is that we can critically reflect upon and evaluate what we actually desire or value so that we have sufficient grounds to say, e.g., that education or health or religion or beauty is a real value for the child's development. These terms "value" and "good" overlap. One current author acknowledges this overlap, because while he opts to restrict the word "value" to designate "a general form of good that can be participated in or realized in indefinitely many ways on indefinitely many occasions",<sup>21</sup> he uses "good" to designate both a particular objective or goal considered desirable and a general form of good. Our main concern here is not the distinction between value and good, but the critical grounding of value or good.

### *An Hypothesis*

Our hypothesis can be presented in three steps. First, we do show in our actions and desires that we value other persons, certain objectives, attitudes, relationships, goods. We experience something in these that attracts us, and we act in a positive manner in their regard. We show great diversity in what we value, in the goals we pursue, and in what we experience as being of value. This is antecedent to moral judgment; it is the context in which moral judgments arise. Secondly, we reflect upon our action and our desires or upon the values we are seeking in these actions and desires to ask whether what we are valuing is really valuable, whether there is some basis other than our actually valuing them that is the basis justifying our valuing them. After reflection, what we estimate as a value appropriate for us may, of course, not be the same as what we pre-reflectively accept as a value. An answer here that consequences justify our valuing of something does not seem to go deeply enough--since we can always ask at this level why some consequences are thought to be fulfilling and others not, and what justifies this viewpoint. An answer that we are structuring our behavior in terms of these values does not seem to be adequate, even though a whole society may agree among themselves to so structure their behavior. For example, a society of sadomasochists may agree to inflict and receive certain sufferings from each other equitably, but we cannot help but ask further whether this is a true human value by which they are structuring their behavior.

Thirdly, then, our experience of acting for a value or a good and our reflection upon this good and our experience may give us access to an insight that gets us beyond the simply factual character of this situation for ourselves or our particular society. We may have the insight that as human beings we orient our action to values or goods and that we become more fully human if we value certain goods, such as respect for the worth of another, and reject others that appear pre-reflectively as values or goods, such as subordinating others wholly to our own private desires. It may be revealed to a sadomasochist, for example, through reflection that, while inflicting pain appears good, tenderness is better or genuinely good, i.e., in accord with rather than contrary to the way human beings should relate to each other as human beings. If, on the other hand, we self-define

our values just as a sadomasochist community may do, and we are willing to prescribe are universally action in accord with this, we are perverting something constitutive of us as human beings which precedes us as experiencers and choosers of value and which is a criterion or norm for self-definitions of value that enhance our humanity. We can call this a constitutive human good, namely, both the human attitude (e.g., respect for truth, for others, for self) and the term of such an attitude, that is a norm or criterion for us as we define our values, because having the structure of being we have as human, certain attitudes and goals fulfill us and certain attitudes and goals diminish us or are regressive.

There is a whole class of actions that are oriented primarily not to the development of the one who acts but to some product outside the agent--such as a house to be built by a carpenter. Here the immediate criterion of the value of the act is the product rather than the development of the agent. Considering the agent superior in value to such products of human activity, however, would be one of the elements of a constitutive human good; and so engagement in such action should itself redound to the development of the agent as well as of the society which he serves. What we have said about the constitutive human good has more immediate reference to actions or attitudes described by the traditional moral virtues and interaction with others in accord with them than to actions oriented to external products; but it embraces these latter as well. There is then, we suggest, a constitutive human good as horizon for--and deeper meaning and criterion of--our human actions, and as the basis on which we can communicate with one another about issues in this area. Most basically, we are more fully human if we self-define our goals and values in a way that enhances this than if we seek to arbitrarily create or define such a good in accord with our present choices or values. It is what we as human persons (see Chapter XII below) can be or become at our best as this relates as horizon and meaning to our present choices, actions and experiences of value.

We can take as an example here the injunction that is basic to Kohlberg's sixth stage, namely that we should treat others in a way that is just and fair. Such a judgment can be looked at from different perspectives. From the hypothesis offered here, the value realized by this injunction is part of the constitutive human good. There is a worth in every human being as human that is distinctively greater than that which belongs to a plant or an animal as such. The worth that others have as human beings has a claim upon our acknowledgement and upon our action and attitude toward them. The worth of others entails certain consequences about how I should act toward them and how I should not act. This claim that "others' worth as human "has upon me is not contradictory to my own basic inclination as a human being, since in part I am constituted as human through being a social being, that is, through being oriented not simply toward my own fulfillment but also toward that of others and toward a community that embraces us both. Thus I am not fully human or mature if I consider others only from the viewpoint of my own advantage or the advantage or disadvantage of my society. There is something constitutive of the human person in virtue of which adopting an attitude of respect for others accords with his or her development, maturation or perfection.

This is contrary to an individualism that interprets social living simply as a means toward the realization of individualized goals or interests. It is also opposed to a collectivism that so exalts the good of the collectivity as to reduce individuals within it simply to the status of instruments for this good. Rather the position we offer recognizes that the good of society is the development of the individuals within it. The institutions of the political community are to serve a common good that redounds to the good of individuals.

Neither Kohlberg nor Munsey and Aron acknowledge such a basis for the moral order, or so it seems. Kohlberg makes no claim to say anything substantive about what the goals of human living are or what constitutes the good life. In fact, he equates statements about goals and the good life with relativism and indoctrination, and avoids such statements because he wants to avoid moral education that is relativistic and indoctrinative. On the other hand, while Munsey and Aron do make the good or fulfillment of the moral agent and even society the context of decisions in life, they deny anything in moral judgment such as a categorical imperative. Moral norms are only summary statements of the wisdom of experience, and always subject to exception. These authors reject anything like a constitutive human good, unless this is to guide one's life by self-defined goals. The "good" for them ends up meaning only what individuals or societies judge to be good through an examination of consequences of the proposed action. The denial of a constitutive human good as the foundation of the moral order is common to these positions.

This common refusal to adopt such a basis for the moral order leads to weaknesses in the position of each. The universalizing that Kohlberg, as theoretician of morality, sees as a formal criterion of the moral judgment, is the result of a process of equilibration through which a young person passes in successive stages of moral judgment, each of them giving way to one that more adequately structures human behavior. Without denying the reality of such equilibration, we can ask what the good is that provokes this continual restructuring of the moral judgment toward the stage six judgment. For him, as for Rawls, it is not (as we shall note at greater length below) the constitutive human good, that is, the fulfillment appropriate for us as human beings--before we judge or choose--that encompasses the worth of another as human and my orientation as a human being to respect that worth. Such a basis would legitimate both universalizing the moral judgment of the sixth stage and the prescriptive force of such an injunction, since this is what it means to be human. But without an acknowledgement of this human good, the prescriptive force to which Kohlberg concludes is simply hypothetical rather than absolute. If one wants a social order that is equilibrated, then one should act and judge equitably, treating all as equals. Further, Kohlberg lacks sufficient justification for his definition of what constitutes the moral judgment if he is unwilling to make a statement about what constitutes the human good or humanity in this area of human living. Similarly, the universalizing that he wishes to preserve as a criterion of moral judgment lacks foundation if he is unwilling to judge how it is appropriate for human beings as such to act toward one another. Only if it is a constitutive human good that provokes the equilibration process, and if it is acknowledged to have this significance, can Kohlberg defend the universality and prescriptiveness of the moral judgment.

Munsey and Aron begin with the agent making creative life decisions in a way that is self-defined, but the context for decision that they present seems to lack the universality and prescriptive force that humans generally acknowledge is present in moral judgments. Once more, since they deny that there is some good that is constitutive for human choice, the kind of necessity they reach is hypothetical. That is, if people value such and such a goal, then they should take certain kinds of action and avoid others. It is not their rejection of a formalism that is the source of the limitation of their position, but rather their rejection of a constitutive human good. They highly esteem openness to contingencies and varying circumstances, and they want to leave any moral norm or goal open for possible exceptions. But the effect is that for them "good" ends up meaning only what individuals or societies judge or choose to value; it is no deeper than that. They are open to any human choice, but not open to the view that to be human entails that one define one's values in a way that promotes a constitutive human good. There seems then in this case to be no sacredness or necessity, importance or obligatoriness to the moral order--nothing that

differentiates it from consumerism in a market economy or choices among interest groups in a democratic society. We shall show later that the proper defense of the scope and creativity of human choice does not depend upon the denial of a constitutive humanity or human good.

Perhaps it is the desire to preserve human autonomy that leads both these positions to the foundations they offer for moral decision or judgment. If so, they may be asserting that there is at least one constitutive factor in the human subject, namely, to be autonomous. We for our part are suggesting that this autonomy or self-definition that we see in human decision and moral judgment has its setting in a human person or subject who has certain potentialities, structures or orientations as a human being that cannot be denied, overlooked or rejected if one wishes to define one's goals in a way that will lead to fulfillment. Thus human autonomy is not absolute, nor is it the only constitutive factor of being human (see Chapter IV on freedom and moral choice). If it is given priority over every other aspect of being human, what results is not simply an alternative way of being human but a diminishment of the agent's human being and of the humanity of the society in which he lives.

The dichotomy between a formalism and a kind of teleology represented by consequentialism would appear to stem from a denial that there is a constitutive humanity in the moral agent and a good that completes the agent as presiding over the moral life. If this good or constitutive humanity is acknowledged, then formalism and consequentialism are transcended and given their proper context. An acceptance of this is an enlargement, not a denial, of the foundations that Kohlberg on the one hand and Aron and Munsey on the other offer for the moral order. Since such acceptance is more properly philosophical than psychological, psychology as a contemporary empirical discipline cannot as such defend this position. But it need not deny it, and in any case the psychologists we are studying acknowledge the need for philosophical judgments in their psychological work.

### *A Phenomenology*

In support of the hypothesis we have presented, we may ask what is really happening when we acknowledge the rights of another person to be treated with respect and fairness and when such acknowledgement affects our attitudes and actions. This would be recognized both by Kohlberg and by Munsey and Aron as an occasion for moral judgment and decision. The question is whether their interpretations of what is happening here are adequate or whether they are to some extent reductionist. Kohlberg would rightly point out, of course, that different things are happening at different stages of the child's, adolescent's or adult's moral development. But as a moral philosopher he does recognize a mature stage in this development, and it is of that stage that we are asking our question. What actually happens when we make a judgment acknowledging the rights of others at this point? A brief phenomenology can help us here toward seeing whether a formalist, a consequentialist, or a view such as we have offered above best interprets this experience.

Let us take the instance of someone in the United States facing a decision whether to discriminate against blacks in hiring for a job or in regard to voting rights. In circumstances where he has the physical power to discriminate he may decide not to because the law is now opposed to this, or because he would lose economically through such discrimination or because he would be subject to violence in revenge for his action. Or he may decide not to because through role-taking, that is, putting himself imaginatively in the place of the other and through universalizing the resultant judgment, he may opt for a social order that treats all with equity when it comes to such

matters; after all, he would not like to be on the receiving end of such discrimination. This latter approach is the result of an equilibration process that results in a moral judgment with the formal characteristics of universality and prescriptiveness, whereas the former approach was a consequentialist one. However, in addition to these reasons and even as his primary reason he may judge that he ought not to discriminate against others due to their color because he thinks that they have a right to be respected and treated equally with others in such matters simply by the fact that they are human beings. As persons they, like the agent, are masters of their own actions and lives, with their own human dignity and the essential worth that goes with this, and with their own human fulfillment toward which they are moving. This calls for respect that precludes subjecting them to discrimination with all the indignities that this involves. The necessity or prescriptiveness present in a judgment to this effect is not simply physical, economic, aesthetic, conventional, of a civil contract, utilitarian or consequentialist, or resulting from role-taking and universalization. It is properly a moral necessity, that is, one that comes from the recognition of the right the other has as a human person and a correlative duty that I have to respect this. Unlike the other bases given above, it has more than a hypothetical prescriptive force, namely, that I should act in a certain way if I want certain consequences or a certain kind of society.

To judge in this fashion is not to abstract my being a human person from all the other dimensions of my existence or to abstract the humanity of the person whose rights I am considering from other aspects of his existence. It is rather to judge the situation on grounds that both include more than the secondary considerations and that are rooted more deeply. This judgment is rooted in the essential worth of the other as a human being and how I should act if I am to come up to the standard appropriate for a human being. If I so judge, I am neither judging in a way that is separated from the values to be realized, nor selecting those values for realization because of certain desirable consequences, role-taking, or universalizing a judgment through a process of equilibration. Rather they are values or an order of good that the other has a right to, and which I as a human being have a duty to respect. If I act contrary to this (e.g., through rape, torture, slavery, manipulation, or discrimination on the basis of color in distributing voting rights or job opportunities), I am acting contrary to what constitutes human worth and human fulfillment, both mine and that of the one whose rights I reject.

Language is supportive of this interpretation of what is happening. For if a person so respecting another is challenged to justify his action, he speaks of the natural or the human rights of the other based on his human dignity or worth, thus indicating that the basis of the injunction is more than consequences, law and order, or role-taking and universalization. (The process of moral reasoning involved in such cases is treated in Chapter VI above). It is a constitutive human good of the other that must be acknowledged and respected, and it is a constitutive human good of the moral agent to accept the claims that others have upon him since he is a social being.

Of course, there can be other phenomenologies offered to interpret what is happening here, and presumably both Kohlberg and Munsey and Aron would offer alternative interpretations. As Kohlberg holds that his own view of stage 6 finds support in the philosophical position of John Rawls', *A Theory of Justice*,<sup>22</sup> it may be relevant to reflect briefly here on that position. Rawls seeks to defend a social order that is fair in the distribution both of civil and of socio-economic goods and rights. He seeks to induce people to accept a foundation for such an order by inviting them to assume an original position in which they would choose the basic principles that are to govern the distribution of goods in their society. What basic principles would they set up if they did not know their own talents or where they as individuals would fit in the socio-economic scale? They would have a concern that the principles would be in their favor through being in favor of

the least advantaged. Rawls considers that there are two principles such a group would establish in the original condition. First, "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all." And secondly, "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity."<sup>23</sup>

Without analyzing these principles further, we should note that the original choosers are operating out of their own interests. As D. F. Scheltens comments:

It is important to keep in mind that the dialogue partners do not yet hold any moral principles. The latter too are suspended. On what basis then will the partners of the original position determine the choice of the principles of justice? They are led only by their own interest: "In choosing between principles each tries as best as he can to advance his interests" (p. 142); ". . . the parties are severally disinterested, and are not willing to have their interests sacrificed to the others. . . ." (p. 129); ". . . they are not bound by prior moral ties to each other" (p. 128). Thus the original position is a pre-moral one, in which the parties in question still have to decide their principles of justice or their ethical principles.<sup>24</sup>

Rawls actually recognizes that when all in a society try to live by these principles of equity "then individually and collectively their nature is most fully realized and within it their individual and collective good."<sup>25</sup> However, it is not from the fulfillment of their human nature that he derives his principles:

On p. 585 he asks whether the principles of justice should not be deduced "from the notion of respect for persons, for a recognition of their inherent worth and dignity." Yet Rawls answers this question negatively: "The notion of respect for the inherent worth of persons is not a suitable basis for arriving at these principles" (p. 586).<sup>26</sup>

While Rawls' formulation of the original condition may be persuasive and helpful for encouraging people to take an impartial stance, if it is presented as a phenomenology of what is actually happening when people acknowledge the rights of others it is rather unhistorical and artificial. It is true that it may represent the basis for such acknowledgement on the part of those who have not got beyond individual interests as a basis for social life. In this way, according to Edmund Sullivan, it defends the ideology of liberalism: "The essence of liberalism is a vision of society made up of independent autonomous units who cooperate only when the terms of cooperation are such as to make it further the ends of each of the parties."<sup>27</sup> Of course a society built on this principle would entail no more than hypothetical necessity in its recognition of the rights of others; that is, they should be respected insofar as this respect furthers my self-defined interests or goals.

We suggested, on the contrary, that the dynamism at the root of the equilibration process leading to the acknowledgement of human rights is a specifically human orientation at the core of our being that includes the acknowledgement of the worth of others and a concern for their fulfillment as part of its horizon. This dynamism and the affectivity (treated in Chapter III above) and activity in accord with it include these elements because as humans we are social beings and other persons have both intrinsic worth and worth for us. A dynamism of this character is part of

our constitutive humanity, and thus a social order based on the dignity of all human persons is part of the constitutive human good. There is a basis beyond our individual interests or the interests of our society for a social order, namely the basis of the worth and dignity of human persons. Indeed, it seems evident that some of our institutions in the United States and in other countries are based on the inherent worth and rights of the human person rather than on the foundations that Rawls and Kohlberg provide. As T. A. Spragens writes:

It seems fairly clear that the idea of natural rights has had a very profound operational significance in the context of limitation on governmental power, civil liberties and so on, which American courts have imposed and guaranteed. It also has had operational significance in the nation's political culture. Any empirical theory of democracy which does not incorporate such realities would strike many of us as rather inadequate.<sup>28</sup>

It is recognized by an increasing number of contemporary philosophers that the real basis for justice is indeed the intrinsic worth of the human person. For example, Ernest Barker holds:

The idea of Justice, which is the impersonal source of law, is the value and worth of individual personality. . . . The intrinsic value of each personality is the basis of political thought just as (and just because) it is the basis of moral thought; and worth of persons--individual persons, all individual persons--is the supreme worth of the State.<sup>29</sup>

David Norton agrees:

Each person *qua* person possesses natural entitlements in virtue of his worth, a worth that is (for actual persons) both potential and actual. As a perfection of a kind, each person's potential worth is absolute, while his actual worth is qualified by degree. Because it is qualified by degree, actual worth furnishes differential entitlement, while worth as pure potential establishes a lower limit of entitlement that is alike for all.<sup>30</sup>

Aron and Munsey also would give a different phenomenology in their interpretation of what happens when we respect the human rights of others than the one we gave. They would interpret decisions to respect the rights of others as occurring within a consequentialist search for fulfillment on the part of the agents. But, as we indicated above, this does not seem to represent what actually occurs in more mature human beings when they respect the rights of others; and, as Aron admits, it entails not an absolute exigency to respect the rights of others, but only a hypothetical necessity, that is, provided we want the consequences of such manifestations of respect. The exigency, we would hold, most basically derives from good or value constituted by my human being as social and the intrinsic dignity or worth of others as human. It has a deeper root than self-defined values; rather, a human being shows greater maturity or completeness as a human being when he or she relates to others in a way that accepts this absolute exigency that derives from the human good. We must evaluate "consequences" as moral criteria in the way that Edward Purcell evaluates "what works" when used as moral criteria: "The test of 'what works' was essentially delusive and circular, for practical efficacy was not an objective criterion. Utility as a rationale demanded an answer to



two questions: useful for what and what was the justification of that purpose."<sup>31</sup> What I wrote in another context on the human good may help to clarify our present evaluation of the adequacy of Aron and Munsey in the question under consideration:

If consequences are good because they help one grow toward the human good, then action is good more because it relates one to the human good in accord with reason than because it has good consequences. Similarly, an action contrary to this human good is morally evil more because it is against the human good proper to man in this action than because it has bad consequences for him and society, immediate and remote. To divorce consequences from the human good (and this includes the common good as well as individual human good) as a moral norm is to leave us without criteria for discerning good from bad consequences. To give them priority over the human good as norms is intrinsically contradictory, since their value depends upon their relation to the human good.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, both Kohlberg and Munsey and Aron would hesitate to accept the phenomenology given above because it would appear to suppose that we can make ontological statements about what constitutes being human. I acknowledge that it does involve such a supposition and that ontological statements are beyond the capacity of empirical psychology as such. However, to assert that we cannot make such statements is a philosophical position, and both those who use a formalist and those who use a consequentialist basis for their study of moral development in children are in fact making philosophical judgments about what it is to be and to act humanly. A phenomenology such as that which we presented above is leading many contemporary philosophers to assert that we do in fact know something of what it means to be human and that this is basic for moral judgment. For example, W. D. Hudson writes:

Can we say that there is a logical connection between what any man finds it intelligible to regard as a good man and what he believes man to be? If so, there would be that much connection between fact and value at least. And should we not be entitled to go on and to say that, if we could settle what man is, we could demonstrate what he ought to do? At the very least, the connection between what we take man to be and what we find it intelligible to consider morally good or bad, obligatory or disobligatory, seems to me to call for closer considerations.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, G.J. Warnock writes:

It appears at least enormously plausible to say that one who professes to make a moral judgment must at least profess that what is in issue is the good or harm, well-being or otherwise, of human beings--that what he regards as morally wrong is somehow damaging, and what he regards as right is somehow beneficial.<sup>34</sup>

The epistemological question, namely, that of the validity of such knowledge, is a serious one. But as we see from above, a number of modern philosophers no longer consider an empiricist or a Kantian epistemology able to explain what actually happens in the moral judgment. This question is treated elsewhere in this volume, and specifically in Chapter IX.

## *An Objection and An Answer*

Some modern moralists would claim that the interpretation we have offered to the effect that there is a constitutive human orientation or intentionality and a constitutive human good represents a pre-modern anthropology. For example, Paul Taylor would characterize this as an ethics based on an "essentialistic conception of happiness":

because it presupposes that there is such a thing as an essential human nature. . . . Essentialist philosophers view the good for man as an ideal of human perfection, a perfection which is uniquely suitable to characteristically human capacities. When this conception of happiness is used as the standard of intrinsic value, that standard becomes identical with the essentialist's standard of human perfection or virtue.<sup>35</sup>

In the modern world we are much more aware than previously of the great diversity among cultures and people. This diversity comes from human self-making and creativity in different environments. To assert the existence of a constitutive human good appears to many to be a rejection of the evidence that what is good for human beings depends upon this diversity and self-making that characterize human existence.

In answer to this, we fully acknowledge that modern evolutionary biology, psychology and cultural anthropology do support a great pluralism or diversity of interpretations of the good life and its dependence upon the creativity and self-making of human beings in differing environments. What these sciences have discovered has significance for philosophical anthropology and for ethics because they show us something of what it means to be human; their findings modify earlier anthropology and moral theory. Through showing us that the structure of human as well as of animal life is pluralistic in a way that is correlated with the spontaneity of the organism or of human beings in interacting with diverse environments, they show us that what is considered the human good is historically conditioned. We do not dispute this, but we contend that this pluralism is compatible with there being intrinsic standards of the human good and that it reflects different opinions about those standards. Human beings' interaction with an environment or world is correlated with the environment itself, with the spontaneity and freedom of the subjects, and also with a distinctively human potential. Spontaneity and adjustment to the immediate environment do not of themselves assure that the resulting choice and action will enhance the humanity of the agent or assure him to be morally good. It is worthwhile showing briefly that there is much in the sciences mentioned above that supports this viewpoint or even presupposes it in a way appropriate to the limits of these sciences.

(a) *Biology*. Man is an animal, and so the findings of evolutionary biology show us something about human nature as well as about animals. The human zygote takes twenty-three chromosomes from each parent with the accompanying genes that are determinants of hereditary traits. Thus there is a commonality among human beings as well as diversity, and this diversity and commonality exist not only among human beings living at the present time but also among those and human beings who lived in the past, even the distant past. It is characteristic of human beings to interact with an environment, but the way such interaction, according to one theory, may benefit a lower organism shows that there are standards such interaction must fulfill if it is to be beneficial. C.H. Waddington shows us, for example, how the horse of the present time has evolved from an animal closer in size to the fox with much less developed lungs and limbs compared to the horse

of today. It is more the phenotype (namely, the organism identified on the basis of behavior) than the genotype (namely the organism identified on the basis of its genetic constitution) that is the unit of evolution. To explain the evolution of an animal, e.g., the horse, one must call upon such factors as the challenge presented by the environment (e.g., that posed by enemies of the horse in the Tertiary period), the spontaneous response of organisms to these challenges (e.g., the horses' strategy of running away rather than standing and fighting), and the feedback of both the environment (e.g., through the survival of the horses that became proficient at this strategy) and behavior (e.g., the mating of horses that have genes capacitating them for this response and thus enhancing the capacity of their offspring) on the genetic system. These affect the gradual changes in this system resulting in a population of organisms that show an appropriately altered phenotype.<sup>36</sup> Granting that the continued life of the species horse is good for it and better than extinction, the aforementioned responses of horses were appropriate to the environment and to the horses' potential, and thus were beneficial to them.

Recently biologists and specifically sociobiologists have found in this reality a basis not only for the diversity of human beings but for their unity, and have built a moral theory on this. While this has led to a reductionist interpretation of human behavior on the part of some representatives of sociobiology, that is not the case with all. For example, Mary Midgley concludes her evaluation of sociobiology by stating that "All moral doctrine, all practical suggestions about how we ought to live, depend on some belief about what human nature is like," and the "traditional business of moral philosophy is attempting to understand, clarify, relate, and harmonize so far as possible the claims arising from different sides of our nature."<sup>37</sup> We can make moral judgments adequately only if we admit claims appropriate to the fulfillment of human nature. Thus contemporary evolutionary biology is not contrary to, but within its own limits, supportive of the existence of a constitutive humanity and human good. In fact, it presupposes this.

(b) *Developmental Psychology*. Recent developments in psychology get beyond the earlier nurture vs. nature disputes and support the view that the development of human beings is due to the active interaction of the growing person with his or her environment or world in a way that leads to a progressive restructuring of the self, of knowledge and of moral judgment. It is a part of being human that there is in the person a "tendency for new characteristics to emerge from previous, global characteristics" and a "tendency (for behavior) to become hierarchically organized, . . . for earlier developments to be continuously subsumed under later developments."<sup>38</sup> This new orientation in psychology is a break with reductionist approaches which characterized much of academic psychology through this century.<sup>39</sup> With this, however, developmental psychologists presuppose the reality of human nature that sets standards and criteria for what may be understood as development and what as regression or failure to develop. For example, Kohlberg recognizes that it is through the subject's active restructuring of his or her moral judgments that he develops, but he accepts that some forms of moral judgment are more adequately and maturely human than others. Piaget finds that the individual cognitive subject restructures his mode of knowing the environment through interaction with that environment, but he presupposes that some cognitive structures are more advanced than others. Erikson shows the personality structure of the adult to be the result of the growing person's restructuring of the self through stages of interaction with an expanding social environment and stages of unfolding inner potential, but he holds that some personality structures are more appropriate to the adult than others. For example, the mature person should be characterized by generativity, i.e., a sustained interest in the

development of the next generation in spite of its costs. All this supports the viewpoint that we offered.

It may be particularly appropriate here to recall that Erikson's work supports the existence of constitutive principles of human development. Although there remain elements of Freud's mechanistic metapsychology in his work, Erikson's findings call for kinds of constitutive principles of human development that transcend Freud's reductionism. While Freud interpreted later forms of ego development as epiphenomena, simply as secondary manifestations of the energies or motivation of the id and the ego's service of the id, Erikson acknowledged emergents in human development that cannot be reduced to their origins or to the sum of their parts.<sup>40</sup> The growing person interacts with his or her social environment more out of search for meaning than by being driven through displaced energies. And in this interaction the child develops new forms of relatedness (e.g., basic trust) and modes of being (e.g., imaginative projections in the child of about three years old that enable him to become "a part of a larger whole, which is his relatedness to himself and the world around him"<sup>41</sup>). There is a schedule for maturation and structure formation and the need for suitable experiences being offered to the child at successive stages of his or her growth to support such formation and maturation. Erikson's findings suggest that we should go further than he himself in getting beyond present concepts of ego, id and super ego as used by many psychoanalysts, for they presume "that there is no such entity as a human person aside from the sum of these subdivisions of the psychic apparatus."<sup>42</sup> His findings also support our giving consciousness a more central place than did Freud or behaviorism, for it is through consciousness, and specifically freedom (see Chapter IV above on freedom and moral choice as well as chapters in the companion volume, *Psychological Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*, edited by R. Knowles), that the individual has some, though limited, control over his life to can change himself and his circumstances. All of this presupposes the reality of a human nature that sets standards for the way the growing subject interacts with his or her environment and the way the social environment interacts with the child.

In particular, we must acknowledge a "specific knowable and instinctive human nature" and "some instinctual and maturational tendencies . . . common to the species as a whole."<sup>43</sup> Freud accepted the existence of instincts (at least in the sense that the id is instinctual), and in accepting them also acknowledged that there is such a reality as human nature. In this he is joined by developmental psychologists, ethologists and behavioral geneticists, though not by existentialists such as Sartre or by behaviorists such as Watson and Skinner. However, Freud's understanding of instinct is very defective. This notion has been difficult to specify, particularly since it is now recognized that none of man's behavior is totally independent of learning or culture. For this reason one can no longer define the instinctive in man as totally dissociated from experience. A more modest definition is needed of the instinctive than that offered in the past, one that even some behaviorists recognize as existing in man. We may, as Yankelovich and Barrett note, accept D.O. Hebb's definition:

The term 'instinctive' will be used to refer to behavior other than reflexes in which innate factors play a predominant part. Empirically, this is behavior in which the motor pattern is variable but with an end result that is predictable from a knowledge of the species without knowing the history of the individual animal.<sup>44</sup>

In this definition of the instinctive, even such human developments as language are included. Thus this descriptive definition releases the instinctive from being confined to blind drives, and "places the phenomenon of the instinctual within the world of significant meanings."<sup>45</sup>

The human being then is a subject who not only does but must restructure himself through interaction with the environment for the purpose of actualizing his being. This actualization of his being as an intrinsic lure calls forth the subject's activity. Human nature here then is not simply that which precedes human action and explains the kinds of action that are distinctive of him. Rather the actualization of his humanity faces the subject as a possibility in need of actualization, a possibility that has not only distinctiveness but also a possibility that demands variety according to the environment of nature and history, differences of age, sex and many other individuating circumstances. The human good is achieved only through an historical process that rightly involves great pluralism without relativism.

Even with the above said, many would still feel the creativity and self-definition we find in men and women to be opposed to a pre-given human nature. Such a reservation may find support in Erikson's analysis of adolescence. In our pluralistic and changing socio-cultural environment, the possibilities that face a young person in life styles, world views, occupation and marriage are quite varied. As a distinctive task of this stage the young person must shape his own identity. The adolescent "from among all possible and imaginable relations . . . must make a series of ever-narrowing selections of personal, occupational, sexual and ideological commitments."<sup>46</sup> For this purpose, the young person is in need of "a system of ideas that provides a convincing world image." As Erikson writes: "It is in adolescence . . . that the ideological structure of the environment becomes essential for the ego, because without an ideological simplification of the universe the adolescent ego cannot organize experience according to its specific capacities and its expanding involvement. . . ."<sup>47</sup> But Erikson seems hesitant to say that the young person needs some ontological understanding of what constitutes humanity and its good. To this extent at least, it may appear to many that developmental psychology does not support the view we have advanced in this chapter.

It is true, we must agree, that the active self-definition that is so much a part of modern Western experience and so central to the task of adolescence has for many philosophers been an argument against considering certain orientations, goals, values, relationships and attitudes as normative for man because they are correlated with a human potential. But is not this viewpoint a misinterpretation of our human self-definition? Is not the meaning of adolescence, for example, found largely in the fact that it is a stage of the person's orientation to a good or kind of be-ing and relatedness that is specifically human, a good or way of be-ing on which man's completion or actualization as human depends? I suggest that this is the case for the following reasons.

There is a certain parallel between the adolescent's knowledge of the world about him and his self-definition at this stage. Piaget shows that at adolescence the cognitive subject has developed a structure of knowledge that capacitates him for simple scientific reasoning. By formal operations, the young person can construct the physical world about him through making and testing hypotheses. Scientific knowledge does involve a cognitive construction of the physical world through the use of mathematics. While many have concluded from this that we do not know the structure of the physical world itself in any real fashion, for Piaget man's cognitive construction of the physical world in science is the means by which we reach structures actually present in this world. From the fact that Piaget grounds the formal operational period in the young person's development of the schemes of the actual and the possible, I have argued elsewhere that it is the knowledge of being that enables the young person to advance to this mode of knowledge.<sup>48</sup> Thus

the condition of possibility for his cognitive construction of the physical world in science is his knowledge of being; the constructivist character of this knowledge is not counter to or independent of his knowledge of objective reality or reality as being. Moreover, the knowledge that makes science possible is not only constructive or structuring knowledge, but also discrimination of qualitative differences in the world by perception and insight.

If this is the case, can we say that the adolescent's construction of his personal life through the choices he is called upon to make is adverse to, or independent of, his orientation to a good or a way of be-ing appropriate to him as human? In his consideration of alternative life styles, occupations, marriage or the single life, the adolescent is evaluating possibilities of human life. He makes his decisions within the context of his human possibilities and their actualization. True, the growing boy or girl lives human life within a particular environment, both physical and socio-cultural, and correlated with individuated potentials and opportunities. But human life itself, as is evident in Erikson's study of stages leading up to adolescence, has certain kinds of defining possibilities and calls for certain kinds of relationships, values and attitudes for its fulfillment.

The manner in which the adolescent or youth orients himself toward the good that completes him as human differs in part from that of the child. Correlated with the formal operational period of his cognitive development, the adolescent presents to himself hypotheses or possibilities of human living that are not limited to adjustment to the present. A greater degree of openness and reflective intentionality is possible and normative for him, as an adolescent. His construction of his life at this stage depends more than earlier on his own knowledge, his own evaluation of possibilities, and his own interests and choices. The consequent freedom which is or should be present in his decisions is no guarantee that he will make decisions that will truly enhance his life as human and that are fitting to him and others. He can as easily, and perhaps more easily, make decisions only on the basis of his unreflected present likes and dislikes or those of his peer group, etc. The possibilities for good or evil are in any case larger in adolescence and youth than they were in childhood, and his responsibility is greater than at earlier stages of his growth. In later adolescence he is given more responsibility for himself and others in his society. The fact that the life he leads as an adult is due to his own construction manifests the manner of his orientation toward his fulfillment as human, rather than the disengagement of choice from a good that is proper for human beings.

In fact, if there were not some ways of living humanly that had intrinsic value, that enhanced and actualized a person and contributed to his completion as human, then how much meaning would there be to the choices that adolescents or adults make? If an understanding of themselves as human beings and of the human world in which they live does not offer them criteria for their choices, they seem to be left with only the criteria of their own sub-culture or their own interests. To see these latter bases as the adequate context of a young person's decisions is to reduce severely the meaning that is present in this stage of life; it is to distort rather than explain the problems and, indeed, the mystery that encompasses them during periods of decision in adolescence and youth. It is to deny that there are right or wrong decisions, or good and better decisions, and to settle for decisions that are successful or unsuccessful by some immediate criteria, pleasurable or painful, conventional or unconventional. On this basis there would be no moral meaning to adolescence and its choices, for moral meaning occurs within the context of man's orientation to the specifically human dimension of living and what is intrinsically valuable for that living.

Neither Erikson nor those who accept his basic interpretation of adolescence conclude from the fact that the adolescent has to construct his life--that there is not a character to human life that constitutes a context of meaning and a norm for the identity that adolescents form. It is essential

for the adolescent to gain as deep an understanding as he can about who he is and about the full dimensions of his environment as human, as well as about what his environment is as a member of a particular society and culture. Without this he cannot know what his possibilities are as a human being and thus the meaning and norms for his choices in life. What he needs then is not only an 'ideological simplification of the universe' or 'a convincing world image',<sup>49</sup> but the truth that is available about the human dimensions of his environment and his possibilities and relationships within it. The fact that the youth constructs his life makes not less but more necessary his understanding of the real dimensions of his humanity and what fulfills it.

(c) *Cultural Anthropology*. Most anthropologists at present reject relativism.<sup>50</sup> Clifford Geertz, as a good example, acknowledges a unity of human nature; indeed, anthropology presupposes this. He does not affirm a unity of nature as did the enlightenment view of man, namely, by stripping away diversity. This view is defective, because it held that the great variety among men "is essentially without significance in defining his nature. . . . [and] consists of mere accretions, distortions even, overlaying what is truly human--the constant, the general, the universal--in man."<sup>51</sup>

Counter to this view is the empirical finding that humans do not exist unmodified by the customs of a particular place and time. On the other hand, Geertz does not avoid relativism "by seeking in cultural patterns themselves the defining elements of a human existence which although not constant in expression, are yet distinctive in character."<sup>52</sup> Seeking in cultural universals the unity of mankind is another way of looking for the lowest common denominator of humanity, and this is not what we want. Most human behavior is the vector outcome of both intrinsic and cultural controls, and so Geertz adopts an interactive view of man as do Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson. It is in man's career that we best discern his nature, for it is through this that his innate capacities are transformed into his actual behavior.<sup>53</sup> Culture is one, though not the sole determinant of this career, and thus cultural particularities themselves can be made to reveal natural processes.

Geertz understands culture not so much as complexes of concrete behavior patterns but "as a set of control mechanisms--plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what the computer engineers call 'programs')--for the governing of behavior."<sup>54</sup> Man is the animal who most needs these "extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such cultural programs, for ordering his behavior,"<sup>55</sup> since he does not have such programming from his instincts or genes save in a most general way. We can see this particularly in childhood practices in many areas of the world, but this is not to deny that there is in the subject an active self-structuring agency that the culture has to take into account and adjust itself to, as Erikson has shown so well.<sup>56</sup> Culture is not simply an ornament of human existence but its essential condition. (See Chapter X below on the moral environment.) An indication of this is found in the fact that man's physical evolution and cultural evolution overlap rather than being wholly sequential. Man's physical evolution (e.g., the anatomy of the thumb, the representation of the thumb on the cortex, and the size of the brain) is in part dependent upon man's development and use of tools, which, by a feedback process, affected in turn even the evolution of man's central nervous system, the shape of his thumb, and the size of his brain. The development of his tools created for man a new environment, and:

By submitting himself to governance by symbolically mediated programs for producing artifacts, organizing social life, or expressing emotions, man determined, if unwittingly, the culminating stages of his own biological destiny. Quite literally, though quite inadvertently, he created himself.<sup>57</sup>

The recognition of diversity in cultures, then, while opposed to an ahistorical interpretation of humanity and morality, contradicts neither the unity of human nature nor the reality of the human good as a criterion of moral choice. To deny this is to consider all cultural conditionings and all human behavior as morally equal, for it is to abdicate a criterion for judging morally that is other than particular customs, cultures and conditions. On the other hand, we must acknowledge the dependence of values on culture as well as on man's intrinsic drives and potential; no other view does justice to the cultural diversity of which we are aware. Yankelovich and Barrett express this well:

The whole lesson of modern anthropology has been that man, even among the most primitive cultures we can find, is ever and always the value-seeking and value-driven animal. There is no necessary conflict between ethical values (superego) and instinct (id). Like any other synergistic structure, values are the joint product of the instinctual and the cultural. The ethical and moral dimensions of man's life have a thoroughly natural basis not reducible either to infantile origins or to social custom. The reality of the ethical, as difficult as it may be to define and clarify, belongs as a primitive concept in any new metapsychology.<sup>58</sup>

There is in this the realization that the culture in which we live can distort as well as support our search for, and interpretation of, true human values. In fact, we have suggested that what is lacking in Kohlberg's view may be partially due to the influence of a democratic process where so many political questions become those of a conflict of interests. Thus he tends to interpret moral judgment somewhat restrictedly in this context. Similarly, we suggest that the interpretations of moral decision by disciples of Dewey may in part be limited by the model of technological intelligence that is used, for in this model it is means rather than human ends or goals that are frequently given primary importance. The final part of this chapter will be relevant to this influence that the culture can have on our interpretation of values.

In this section we first of all presented an hypothesis of a constitutive human dynamism or thrust and a constitutive human good as normative in morality, with the suggestion that if Kohlberg, Munsey and Aron would accept this, they would overcome the dichotomy that divides them. An acknowledgement of this would give a basis for the universality and prescriptiveness that Kohlberg sees as the criteria of moral judgments. It would give also a context for a teleological approach since the value of consequences of human action are secondary to, and dependent upon, the constitutive human good and humanity that this fulfills. We defended this hypothesis by the use of a phenomenology of moral judgment, using the case of what actually happens when we treat others justly out of a moral conviction. Finally, we presented the objection to such an interpretation that may derive from the diversity of human cultures and the creativity and autonomy of human moral experience. Here we showed that to acknowledge the reality of a constitutive humanity and human good is not specifically the view of a pre-modern philosophy. Rather, it is supported by contemporary interpreters of the evolutionary process, human development and cultural diversity inasmuch as they understand these processes in the context of an interaction between an organism or humankind and the environment or world, for this interaction presupposes and supports a unity in human nature and its constitutive fulfillment or good, as well as a pluralism consistent with this.



## Types of Values

It may be helpful here, in view of our whole project, to consider certain types of value since an essential part of moral education is an education in values and in the capacity to choose among them. By 'value' here, we do not mean primarily what an individual or society in fact chooses or toward which they have a positive attitude. Rather, we mean some thing, act, attitude, relationship or person or group that has instrumental or intrinsic worth because of its humanity or because it enhances our humanity--in short, because of its relation to the constitutive human good. The affective reaction we have to this reality should give us access to its value, as is shown in Chapters III and VII of this volume. This was acknowledged by classical philosophy; for example, Thomas Aquinas notes that: "[T]he virtuous man judges correctly about the goal of virtue, because as each person is so does the proper end seem to him, as is said in *Ethics*, 3. Therefore for judging rightly about what is to be done, i.e., for prudence, it is required that man have the moral virtue."<sup>59</sup>

But we usually or frequently cannot trust our affective reaction so totally that in important matters we can do without a critical reflection by which we compare a projected action, relationship, etc., with what we have previously called the constitutive human good. Does it enhance this good or support it, or does it diminish it for ourselves or for others? Is it appropriate for me in my particular circumstances, even if it does enhance the human good? (See Chapter VI above on how we make concrete moral decisions.) For values the primary point of reference then is the human person, as we have seen previously. This view is not egocentric, since it calls for respect for the worth of other persons. Nor is it anthropocentric, for the constitutive human good which is the perfection of our humanity may well involve, as religions hold, a larger than human good. That is, the human person is called to value and seek his human good within the context of a relationship to God as the ultimate horizon of human development.

Within this context, we now ask how we might distinguish some major types of human values. Of course, there are many different ways in which we can classify values.<sup>60</sup> In examining books on this topic, one finds almost as many ways of dividing types of values as there are books.<sup>61</sup> At times it does not seem that this division of values into types is of much practical benefit in reference to moral education, because some divisions aim more at theoretical inclusiveness than at practical relevance. If our interest here is more the latter than the former, then it would seem helpful to offer first some suggestions on what endangers valid insight into human values in our time, then present a viewpoint on types of values that may be helpful in these circumstances.

### *The Threat of Nihilism*

If there is validity to what we have written so far in this chapter, it is of overriding importance in our time that we acknowledge the claim of a human good upon us that precedes our choices and individual or social interests--namely, one that is appropriate to the human dynamism or intentionality from which our choices and interests come, and that is the value to which we should adapt our choices and interests if these are to promote our real human development. The danger that threatens this attitude in our time is perhaps primarily one that lies close to a central strength of our modern western culture, namely, its spirit of creativity shown in our institutions and technology. To many in this culture it seems that values are most basically the creation of human beings in varied cultures, and that to be human is most basically to create the values we will live by. Iris Murdoch describes a type of current reflection on values as follows:

The center of this type of post-Kantian moral philosophy is the notion of the will as the creator of value. Values which were previously in some sense inscribed in the heavens and guaranteed by God collapse into the human will. There is no transcendent reality. The idea of the good remains indefinable and empty so that human choice may fill it. The sovereign moral concept is freedom, or possibly courage in a sense which identifies it with freedom, will, power . . . the guarantor of the secondary values created by choice. . . . It must be said in its favor that this image of human nature has been the inspiration of political liberalism.<sup>62</sup>

In this perspective freedom and creativity are set in opposition to the givenness of values; claims upon us come most basically from acts of our will rather than from human values that precede our choice. This viewpoint seems to be present in both Kohlberg's interpretation of moral judgment as deriving from an equilibration process and in Aron's and Munsey's interpretation of moral choice as deriving from a person's autonomous action after a consideration of consequences. In practice, for most people this creativity and freedom attaches itself to interests they have-- antecedently and unreflectively--in a particular kind of activity. "Business is business", "art for art's sake", "that's politics", "it's all right as long as it doesn't hurt anyone" are all contemporary phrases that reflect human engagement in different areas of human activity where freedom and creativity may be evident for self-defined values, but where the values sought are not subjected to critical examination. This results in a disintegration of the person, and a subjection of the worth of the person to the achievement, products, or pleasures, that these particular types of activity offer. It is to subvert the human good and therefore results in a loss of a sense of the worth of the person.<sup>63</sup>

The view that we are ultimately creator of our values and modern practices that reflect this view lead to nihilism and, perhaps, express it before this nihilism is conscious. To quote Nietzsche on the nature of nihilism:

What does nihilism mean?--That the highest values devalue themselves.

The aim is missing: "Why?" finds no answer. According to this view, our existence (action, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning: the pathos of "in vain" is the nihilists' pathos--at the same time, as pathos, an inconsistency on the part of the nihilists.<sup>64</sup>

It is described differently by different authors, but all recognize a void at its center.

The nature of the void called nihilism is described, with varying degrees of clarity, as the "loss of the centre", an "encounter with nothingness", the "incapacity to escape boredom," the "lack of a proper philosophy of life". Most writers revert to Nietzsche's terms: the loss of sense and purpose, the devaluation of all values, the sense of nothingness.<sup>65</sup>

The source of this in modern western culture seems to be the premise that there are so many conflicting claims to truth about reality that each claim is itself undermined by objections from others. Claims to a truth about life that would give a ground for values are undermined particularly by modern science and historicism. All of this shows that "The deeper one looks, the more our valuations disappear--meaninglessness approaches! We have created the world that possesses values!"<sup>66</sup> Thus the view that our creation is the source of our values ends in a sense of meaninglessness and nihilism. This attitude has in the last hundred years spread from humanists to very wide sections of the population in the west.

Thus if one puts creativity and freedom at the source of human values, the result is a sense of meaninglessness and nihilism. Human beings know that they are not--by way of their choices and interests as such--the creators of value in any ultimate sense; a life led on the illusion that they are leads to a void. If, on the other hand, one recognizes that basic human values are given antecedently to our choice, this need not result in creativity and freedom; witness many traditional cultures that are custom-bound. However, these cultures do frequently sustain a strong sense of meaning in people's lives. The acknowledgement of human values as claims on our choice and interest, rather than as creatures of our choice and interest, can itself lead to creativity and can be freely given. For example, at the foundation of the United States was the acknowledgement of certain God given human rights that it was the function of government to protect. This free acknowledgement led to the creativity evident in establishing structures likely to defend such rights. Freedom then is more properly itself or more humanly perfect when it acknowledges such values than when it takes it upon itself to create such values. Creativity contributes to human life and value when it is exercised within such acknowledgement. This is true in individual life as well as in political, economic, cultural and social life.

### *Relationships Among Human Values*

In our culture where the loss of the recognition of human values as antecedent to, and criteria for, human freedom and creativity, leads to a sense of meaninglessness, there is a need for a renewed sense of the primacy of the human good or human values. And in our non-traditional culture where calls from values of all sorts constantly bombard people because of the pluralistic society in which we live, there is need for some integration of values. The following three areas of reflection seem to me to contribute toward such a restoration of a sense of the human good and the integration of varied values. These reflections are no more than an initial sketch, but they may contribute to an understanding of the relation of the human good and moral choice.

In the first place, the insights of developmental psychology and specifically those offered by Erik Erikson seem to contribute both toward a restoration of the sense of the priority of human good over human choice in a way that is appropriate to our time and toward an integration of varied human values. This is the case because Erikson's analysis uncovers a schedule of unfolding potentialities in the growing person and an interaction between the social environment and the growing person correlated with this maturation. It is then a value for the society around the child to support its development in a way appropriate to its maturing capacities. And it is a value for the child to interact with his or her expanding social environment in a way proportionate to individuating circumstances and gifts, but also in a way that contributes to the emergence of strengths or virtues that lead toward the maturity which Erikson calls generativity.<sup>67</sup> This theme will be developed more fully and appropriately in the psychological volume in this series. Here we simply want to note that the virtues the growing person is called to develop throughout his interaction with society and the care that society is called on to take in reference to the growing person, all form a kind of integrating principle for values that are truly human because they enhance the constitutive humanity of both child and caring agents.

Secondly, if we mean by types of values the different general forms of good "that can be participated in or realized in indefinitely many ways on indefinitely many occasions,"<sup>68</sup> we could divide them as follows: knowledge, life, play, aesthetic experience, sociability or friendship, practical reasonableness and religion.<sup>69</sup> However, without underestimating the validity of this distribution, our earlier phenomenology of non-discriminatory action perhaps gives us a context

for a more concrete and personal division. What was the human value involved in such an instance that gave rise to a moral obligation in the given circumstances? We noted that this value was both the worth or dignity of the other and the orientation that is part of the agent's humanity as a social being toward relating to others in society through giving and receiving and through mutual respect. The principle on which we identified this value involved an object pole and a subject pole. The other with his worth as human in himself and as part of the horizon or the good that completes the individual agent is the object pole here; the subject pole is the orientation proper to the agent to relate to other human beings through respect, justice and, let us add, love.

The value we are speaking of here is not exhausted by the specific relation of justice to an individual other. It involves also a community ordered in justice and love and an attitude on the part of the subject toward the formation, support or reformation of such a society or political order that respects the rights or dignity of all the individuals within it. Thus we largely agree with the positions of Kohlberg and Rawls we summarized earlier, though we differ from them through grounding justice in the dignity of the human person and our orientation as social beings to respect that dignity. This value involves too those special relationships of friendship and in particular, that are found in a marital relationship and the family; all of these are human values or integral dimensions of the human good that fulfills man. Developmental psychologists show us that individuals must restructure themselves progressively through childhood, adolescence and early adulthood if they are to freely and consistently appreciate this dimension of human value. We should note that the modern world is tragically marred by unbelievable atrocities committed against this basic human value; we see this in the many millions killed, tortured, and maltreated, in concentration camps and elsewhere in the twentieth century.

Using this same basic principle of an integral dimension of the human good to identify other basic types of human value, we can specify another as body or bodily values, namely that order of our life that is primarily physical and our orientation to its preservation and enjoyment, and to growth in it. This could include values external to man such as property that is instrumental in supporting our physical life, as well as our orientation toward these external goods within our orientation to the preservation and enhancement of our life. Food, clothing, shelter, energy, much of our technology, means of transportation, healthy environment, etc., and the money that can purchase these come to mind here. This includes also and even more than external goods the goods internal to the human person such as life, health, physiological maturation, physical skills, pleasure, physical exercise and play, etc.; many of these are both intrinsically valuable and instrumentally valuable. There is a certain priority in time that these values enjoy over the values of human relationships, because it takes a certain physiological development and other developments on this level before the individual is able to appreciate and honor human relationships such as those we described above.

There are, of course, human relationships essential for the child from the first moment of his existence, such as the mutuality of mother and infant; these are largely expressed through the mother's caring for the infant's specifically physical needs and the infant's responding to her as he responds to the goods of the physical order being offered him or her. This instance of the parent caring for the child shows us that this level of bodily values is frequently or even commonly caught up into a more fully human level. For example, we build a museum or a school; food is consumed in the context of human companionship; parents provide food for their children; individuals and a political community seek to feed the poor, clothe the naked, heal the sick; bread and wine are used as sacramental signs. Thus activities directed toward such physical or bodily needs are animated by, and expressive of, a person's or society's orientation to the values of knowledge or beauty, the

values of human relationships, and religious values. However, in our society marked by consumerism and hedonism the pursuit of possessions and satisfactions of physical needs or desires frequently crowd out awareness of the deeper human values needed for our human fulfillment. It is engaged in at the cost of the denial of justice, love, beauty, knowledge and, many of us would add, God.

We may roughly associate a number of values such as knowledge, beauty, identity, aliveness to values, and many forms of play as a third generic type of value which we may designate personal or self values as distinct from bodily and social values. There is obviously a melding of one type of value with other types, but there is a family of values that is not primarily bodily or social. These are goods that are far better to have, other things being equal, than not to have; they are dimensions of the constitutive human good that enhance human being, and by the orientation constitutive of being human we tend toward these values or goods. There is an object pole here such as truth or beauty and a subject pole such as knowledge and aesthetic appreciation and creativity. Many human skills can be included here that are enhancing for the person to exercise as well as being instrumental for others, such as skills exercised in many different professions and occupations in life. Not all of these values are on the same level. For example, some areas of truth and knowledge are more centrally human values, or of intrinsic worth, and they enhance human existence more than others. There has to be choice among these values, of course, for one cannot equally seek them all. There is a legitimate and necessary pluralism among individuals and societies in the ways that these values are appreciated, ordered and expressed. Engagement in the pursuit of these values may and frequently is, as we said in reference to bodily values, expressive of and animated by concern for social and religious values. Unfortunately in our culture, which is so oriented toward the external, these values are frequently given little prominence in the lives of many people.

We may add that moral values can be understood as personal values that reach the root of the human self; they are far more closely related to the self than, for example, some areas of knowledge (e.g., of the physical sciences). Or moral values may preferably be understood as pervading all genuine human action rather than as a distinct generic order of values. They are present whenever a person orients himself freely toward the constitutive human good in accord with practical reason. For example, personal integrity, justice, honesty, courage, openness to the deeper human values are included here as the subject pole that represents a responsiveness to human values as they are appropriate to the individual person. (See Chapter V on moral character.) Fidelity to conscience that is formed by practical reasonableness or, if properly understood, love, may sum up the aspect in which these values can be considered personal or self values. Realistic appreciation of these values obviously calls for a certain restructuring in the normal human life so that the individual does not give prime importance to his individual and material needs.

In the estimation of most people in history, there is a fourth basic type of value that we can designate as religious. Here the object pole is found in the Sacred or, in western religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in God as understood as transcendent yet immanent personal being. The subject pole is found in human openness to the Sacred or God, as found in faith, trust, and love, and in liberation from what subverts such openness. There is an intrinsic worth or dignity in the Sacred or God that merits or deserves our acknowledgement. For those who believe that God is the source and goal of all values, God and relation to or communion with him is the apex of fulfillment for human life. Moral values may be understood as implicitly religious since the absoluteness that is a characteristic of certain moral injunctions (e.g., not to directly kill an innocent person) and the sacredness of the other that is the basis for certain moral injunctions are themselves participations in the Sacred that is God. (For a treatment of the relation of morality and religion,

see Chapter IX.) According to Christians and many others, love of God is not opposed to appreciation and pursuit of human values in history, but is the ultimate meaning of the human search. Man is meant for more than simply human values, which are participations in a larger and ultimate value. For human beings to acknowledge this, however, calls for a conversion or enlightenment that is a gift of God to those who are open to it.

Thirdly, and finally, one may wonder what value the physical world around us has when we take as criterion of value the constitutive human good. Does this mean that the physical world has only an instrumental value for man; is it without intrinsic value? Certainly we find many traditional societies that look upon the physical world not only as something usable, but as a whole order of reality with which they have a tie of kinship. Thus they respect it and its inner dynamism and beauty, for they consider that they came from the same womb as did nature. St. Francis of Assisi called nature "sister". It is particularly our utilitarian civilization that has reduced it to the status of a quarry that is used but need not be respected.

In recent years there has been, fortunately, a reaction against a simply exploitative approach to the physical world. Many are adopting a viewpoint that we are part of this physical world and that we should preserve with it an ecological balance while we use it. There seems to be more than sentimentalism to this new or renewed attitude, and our approach to value in this chapter supports it. We have not developed an egocentric criterion of value, for we acknowledge man as a social and indeed a religious being, and so we acknowledge that we are oriented and must orient ourselves to a constitutive human good that involves other human beings and God himself.

How does the physical world fit into this picture? In a way analogical to our experience of our own desires and the human dynamism from which they come, we can recognize that the physical world is shot through with intentionality or dynamic inner directedness toward being. (Chapter III in this book also affirms this.) The world is not simply a machine that moves as part mechanically moves part. Teleology is evident in animals for they seek food, sex and play. It is evident also in the very organisms of both animals and plants, since in organisms there is an inner orientation to growth, to reproduction, to the preservation of their being and resistance to what threatens this being. The part of modern evolutionary theory that ascribes this process to chance and natural selection alone has had to suppress evidence for this teleology.<sup>70</sup> Teleology is also evident in the non-living world for here too the pull of a molecular or larger structure is operative in the movement of matter. The characteristics of a machine are no longer adequate as an explanation even though this is all that physics may describe. This does not mean that we have to be panpsychists in order to acknowledge the presence of purpose,<sup>71</sup> but rather that we need to accept the existence of teleology in physical reality that has neither consciousness nor life.

Classical philosophy recognized that each being seeks or holds on to its being in some real though analogical sense. The contemporary study of physical reality by the physical sciences manifests, as Koestler and others bring out, that physical things strive for an order of being that is larger than their own individual being. One conclusion we may draw from this is that it is not opposed to a recognition of the goodness or value of animals, plants and non-living physical reality to use them for human purposes. This too can be a fulfillment for such physical beings. Though this is not without loss, loss is frequently involved in a reorientation to a more than immediate purpose; and we have no basis for ascribing to animals, plants, and non-living physical reality the kind of intrinsic worth that we ascribe to human beings and that prohibits us from subjecting their good to our own.

We can and, it seems, must hold that there is an intrinsic value--or goodness, if some would wish to reserve the term "intrinsic value" for human beings specifically--in physical reality and an

orientation in this reality toward such goodness or being. It befits us to respect this and indeed admire it, for it is admirable. It befits us to be basically at peace and harmony with this order, not only because that is a way to respect our own being, but also because it is a way to respect the degree of being had by physical reality below the human scale. This attitude of respect is one of the ways that many of our contemporaries seek to achieve an approach to human life and reality at large that is integrative in the sense that it seeks a fulfillment proper to human beings in a way that subordinates rather than excludes lesser values.

In conclusion, we have in this chapter sought to show that an integration of a constitutive human good and a distinctive moral choice offers a better basis for moral judgment and creative life decisions than either Kohlberg's deontology or Aron and Munsey's consequentialism taken alone. In fact, we have suggested that the view we have developed provides more adequate foundations for the efforts of these psychologists and educationists to promote the moral education of children and adolescents: that it integrates the valuable work they have already done while overcoming the dichotomy between their views.

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## Notes

1. See L. Kohlberg, "From Is to Ought: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away with It in the Study of Moral Development", in Theodore Mischel, ed., *Cognitive Development and Epistemology* (New York, Academic Press, 1971), pp. 152, 154.

2. See, for example, Jean Piaget, "Piaget's Theory", *Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology*, ed. Paul H. Mussen (3rd ed., New York: Wiley, 1970), vol. 1, 722.

3. Kohlberg, "From Is to Ought", pp. 214-215.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

6. See L. Kohlberg, "Educating for a Just Society: An Updated and Revised Statement", in Brenda Munsey, ed., *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1980), pp. 463-464 where he speaks of two forms of participation helpful to the moral education of high school students: "participation in the outside community . . . (and) real power and democratic participation in the governance of the high school itself. The general educational rationale for both is still best given by Dewey's . . . theory as this has been elaborated in the psychological theory of Piaget. . . . According to both, the fundamental aim of education is development, and development requires action or active experience. The aim of civic education is the development of a person with the structures of understanding and motivation to participate in society in the direction of making it a better or more just society. This aim requires experience of active social participation as well as the learning of analytic understandings, of government, and the moral discussion of legal and political issues."

7. See Brenda Munsey, "Cognitive-Development Theory of Moral Development: Metaethical Issues", *ibid.*, pp. 161-181.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

10. See I. Aron, "Moral Education: The Formalist Tradition and the Deweyan Alternative", *ibid.*, pp. 401-426.

11. *Ibid.*, 412. This is a quotation from John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Modern Library, 1930), p. 179.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 413.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 420.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 421.

15. See Bill Puka, "Kohlbergian Forms and Deweyan Acts: A Response", *ibid.*, pp. 429-454.

16. See articles by Puka and Kohlberg, *ibid.*

17. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 130, 141.

18. See also the study of the epistemological question in my book *God's Work in a Changing World* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1985), chap. 9, "Developmental Psychology and Knowledge of Being", pp. 287-314. As noted there, our knowledge of reality is explained in contemporary psychology, on the one hand, by perception that is studied by experiments on people discriminating shapes, etc. (e.g., James and Eleanor Gibson), and, on the other hand, as mediated by the cognitive subject's equilibration process via assimilation and accommodation of the environment to cognitive schemes (Piaget). It can be shown that both perception and equilibration processes--and insight mediated by these--are present in our knowledge of reality or being. One thing that this means is that when we make a factual judgment about what is, we are already dependent upon human action (i.e., the equilibration process). And since our human action is for the human good or value, because it is for our human being in the sense of the protection, enhancement, actualization of our being, etc., our judgments about facts are already dependent on our orientation to, and action for, values. For example, our judgment about the meaning of the fulfillment or flourishing of our humanity reflects not only knowledge dependent upon perception, but knowledge dependent on our values and action for values. It follows that in being derived from our knowledge and judgment of what is, the prescriptivity present in moral judgments is in part derived from our value knowledge. Thus the exigency that exists in the moral judgment is not without basis in our judgment about what our humanity is. There is not the fact-value dichotomy that much contemporary moral philosophy claims, unless one's epistemology is Kantian or empiricist. Further development of this theme can be found in Chapter III.

19. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 1414.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 567.

21. John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 61.

22. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). See the statement by Dwight Boyd, "The Rawls Connection", in Munsey (ed.), *Moral Development*, p. 185, that Kohlberg holds that "the central achievement of Rawls' theory is that it represents the first clear systematic justification of the principles and methods of decision we call 'Stage 6', which were only partly articulated by Kant."

23. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

24. D.F. Scheltens, "The Social Contract and the Principal of Law", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 17 (1977), 331-332. The enclosed quotations are from Rawls' book.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 528.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

27. E. Sullivan, "A Study of Kohlberg's Structural Theory of Moral Development: a Critique of Liberal Social Science Ideology", *Human Development*, 20 (1977), 362.



28. T.A. Spragens, *The Dilemma of Contemporary Political Theory: A Post-Behavioral Science of Politics* (New York: Dunellen, 1973), pp. 105-106.

29. E. Barker, *Principles of Social and Political Theory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 123. This is cited by Scheltens, art. cit., p. 338.

30. David Norton, *Personal Destinies: A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 311.

31. Edward Purcell, Jr., *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), p. 268. Also see Victor Ferkiss, *The Future of Technological Civilization* (New York: Braziller, 1974) for a similar critique of liberal society. For example, he writes: "Reform liberalism today lacks . . . a vision of the good society because it is liberal and focuses on means rather than ends." (p. 62).

32. J. Farrelly, *Human Sexuality: A Critique*, chap. 5 in Farrelly, *op. cit.*, p. 102. Perhaps it is relevant here to note that elsewhere I support the view that there are occasions when it is morally permissible to act directly contrary to an immediate dimension of the human good to which a human act is oriented when the full human dimension of the good to which it is directed cannot be preserved from serious harm by lesser means. See J. Farrelly, "The Principle of the Family Good", chap. 4 in Farrelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-91. In this specific matter I differ from the position presented by Joseph Boyle on moral reasoning in Chapter V above. We hold much in common concerning moral reasoning--such as our acceptance of the human good as basic to moral reasoning and choice and our rejection of consequentialism. Perhaps the different adjectives we use to designate the human good--he uses "entire" or "total" or "integral" while I use "constitutive"--reflect somewhat different reactions against consequentialism. While his reaction seems primarily focused on the difficulty of comparing one human good with another in consequentialism, my reaction is primarily focused on the self-defined character of the good in this theory. Thus he insists that the basic principle of the human good demands that we not undertake action against one or another human good, while I insist that it demands that we not act against the constitutive human good. I would interpret an amputation of a gangrenous leg to preserve the health of the whole body as morally permissible action against one dimension of the human good to preserve a larger dimension of the same kind of human good. And on analogous grounds I would defend the moral permissibility of contraception in some circumstances. He would accept the moral permissibility of the amputation, although he would describe this as not being direct action against a human good; and he would judge contraception differently.

33. W.D. Hudson, *The Is-Ought Question* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 29.

34. G.J. Warnock, *Contemporary Moral Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 57.

35. Paul Taylor, *Principles of Ethics: An Introduction* (Encino, Calif., Dickenson Pub. Co., 1975), pp. 132-133.

36. See C.H. Waddington, "The Theory of Evolution Today", in Arthur Koestler and J.R. Smythies (ed.), *Beyond Reductionism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 357-395.

37. Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 166.

38. Richard Lerner, *Concepts and Theories of Human Development* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1976), p. 117.

39. See Bernard Rosenthal, *The Images of Man* (New York: Basic Books, 1971) for a critique of reductionism in modern psychology.

40. See D. Yankelovich and W. Barrett, *Ego and Instinct: The Psychoanalytic View of Human Nature (Revised)* (New York: Random Books, 1970), particularly chapter 17, "The Core of Reconstruction".

41. *Ibid.*, p. 314.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 323.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 317.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 377. The quotation is from D.O. Hebb, *Organization of Behavior: A Neuropsychological Theory* (New York: Wiley, 1949), p. 166. Italics added.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 375.

46. E. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 245.

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 27.

48. See "Developmental Psychology and Man's Knowledge of Being", cited in footnote 18.

49. We go beyond Erikson's formulation in one place by what we say here. Largely because of the formulation Erikson gives there, which is weaker than some he gives elsewhere, Peter Homans argues that while there is some 'theological coloration' in Erikson: "his formulations are also clearly psychological in character. For this reason we may say that Erikson has created a system of psychological meaning which both assimilates and secularizes (repudiates) traditional theological meanings. Identity-formation is the assimilation and secularization of the activity of justification by faith." See Homans, "Protestant Theology and Dynamic Psychology", *Anglican Theological Review*. Supplemental Series, #7 (Nov., 1976), 135. Also see his article, "The Significance of Erikson's Psychology for Modern Understanding of Religion", in P. Homans (ed.), *Childhood and Selfhood: Essays on Tradition, Religion and Modernity in the Psychology of Erik Erikson* (Lewisburg: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 264-292. For an interpretation of Erikson as bringing together "an Aristotelian essentialism and a more modern evolutionary and adaptive point of view", see Don Browning, "Erikson and the Search for a Normative Image of Man", *ibid.*, pp. 264-292.

50. See Clifford Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man", in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 37.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

53. See *ibid.*, p. 52.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

55. *Loc. cit.*

56. Waud Kracke, "A Psychoanalyst in the Field: Erikson's Contributions to Anthropology", in Homans, *Psychology and Childhood*, pp. 147-188, shows the strengths and weaknesses of Erikson's anthropological studies.

57. Geertz, *ibid.*, p. 48.

58. Yankelovich and Barrett, *Ego and Instinct*, p. 326.

59. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 58, 5. His reference is to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

60. Nicholas Rescher orders classifications of values according to whether these classifications refer to subscribership to values, the objects valued, the sort of benefit at issue, the sort of purposes at issue, the relation between subscriber and beneficiary, or the relation of the values to other values. See Rescher, *Introduction to Value Theory* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), chapter 2.

61. See, for example, Louis Lavelle, *Traite des Valeurs*, Tome Second, *Le systeme des differentes valeurs* (Paris: Universitaires de France, 1955); Donald Walkout, *The Good and the Realm of Values* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978); J. N. Findlay, *Values and Intentions: A Study in Value-Theory and Philosophy of Mind* (London: George Allen & Unwin, LTD, 1961); Georg H. von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963); John Finnis, *Natural Law*, chapters 3 and 4.

62. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 80-81.

63. See David Norton, *Personal Destinies*, p. 216 for a comparison of this modern widespread approach with Aristotle's "eudaimonism" expressed by his assertion, "No one chooses to possess the whole world if he has first to become someone else", "Aristotle's words (*Nich. Eth.* 9.4. 1166a) epitomize a radical disparity between moral sensibilities of his time and our own. For surely the motto of our time runs, 'Show me how to possess the whole world and I will become whomever you please.' . . . The precondition of *eudaimonia* is the unique, irreplaceable, potential worth of the person. It is his readers' sense of this personal worth on which Aristotle relies in his confident assertion that no one would wish to exchange himself, even 'to possess the whole world.' Today we are without this sense, and rush to exchange ourselves at the prospect of the most trivial rewards. To persons who have no knowledge of who they are, much less of anything in the way of irreplaceable personal worth, nothing is to be lost by such exchange."

64. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), pp. 9, 318.

65. Johan Goudsblom, *Nihilism and Culture* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), pp. 16-17.

66. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 326.

67. See E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1963), chapter 7, "Eight Ages of Man", pp. 247-274.

68. Finnis, *Natural Law*, p. 61.

69. *Ibid.*, chapters 3 and 4. See also G. Grisez and R. Shaw, *Beyond the New Morality: The Responsibilities of Freedom* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1974), chapter 7.

70. See Arthur Koestler, *Janus: A Summing Up* (New York: Random House, 1978), ch. 11, "Strategies and Purpose in Evolution", pp. 205-222 for a documentation of this coverup and evidence for teleology. He notes (226): "The purposiveness of all vital processes, the strategy of the genes and the power of the exploratory drive in animal and man, all seem to indicate that the pull of the future is as real as the pressure of the past. Causality and finality are complementary principles in the sciences of life; if you take out finality and purpose you have taken the life out of biology as well as psychology."

71. Koestler notes that interpretation of physical phenomena by statistical probability works because there is a tendency in random phenomena toward order. He notes a half-dozen words that different physicists and others have coined to describe this reality, and adds (270): "What all these theories have in common is that they regard the morphic, or formative or syntropic tendency, Nature's striving to create order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, as ultimate and irreducible principles beyond mechanical causation."



## Chapter IX

# What Makes the Human Person: A Being of Moral Worth?

*William E. May*

The purpose of this paper is to explore the question "What makes man to be a being of moral worth?" By a being of moral worth I mean an entity that is the subject of inalienable rights that are to be recognized by other entities capable of recognizing rights and that demand legal protection by society. By a being of moral worth I mean an entity that is valuable, precious, irreplaceable just because it exists. By a being of moral worth I mean a being that cannot and must not be considered simply as a part related to some larger whole.

I believe that men are such entities. I realize, of course, that many people do not believe that men are beings of moral worth. But this belief is at the heart of Christian faith, and it is, moreover, central to the "American proposition". It is one of those truths that we hold in common, as a matter of shared consensus.<sup>1</sup> Although many of our contemporaries may radically deny this belief (that is, they consider it completely false as a proposition about the meaning of human existence), it is certainly operative on a pragmatic level in American society and, indeed it seems to be a belief operative in other societies as well, including the international society as organized in the United Nations. B.F. Skinner, it can safely be surmised, would hardly maintain that man is a being of moral worth as a statement of metaphysical truth, but he would maintain that he ought to be so treated and regarded in his sociopolitical life. For him and for many of our contemporaries it is "true" in a pragmatic sense that man is a being of moral worth; belief in this proposition makes good laws possible. None of our fellow citizens (no man, really), save for pathological conditions, wants his fellow men to treat him as an object that can be discarded, as something to be manipulated or managed or even destroyed for the interests of others.

That man is an entity of moral worth is something recognized publicly in the United States: the first ten amendments to the Constitution, and many subsequent ones as well, were intended to limit the power of government, and they limited this power in the name of rights belonging to individuals (and to states). The Supreme Court decisions in the *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* cases, on the constitutionality of abortion laws, were based on the right (moral and legally protectable) to privacy of the woman seeking an abortion. The operative principle governing the Court was that a human being is an entity of moral worth, a subject of protectable rights.

In the *Roe* and *Doe* decisions the Supreme Court also held that a fetus is not such an entity. Although the Court did declare that it had no intention of settling the difficult question of when human life begins (it explicitly admitted that if the fetus is indeed humanly alive the decision it ultimately rendered would have been different, and in admitting this the Court implicitly acknowledged that being a human being is, *coram lege*, a morally significant factor),<sup>2</sup> it actually did determine this question. For it consistently maintained that the fetus, even after viability, is only "potential life" or the "potentiality of life".<sup>3</sup> Obviously if the fetus is only "potential life" or the "potentiality of life" it is not life. My oldest boy, (for instance, is a potential father--he is not (so far as I know) actually a father. But were he actually a father he could not be potentially a father.

The abortion controversy as such is not of concern to us here. This controversy, however, is very illuminating for answering the question before us: "What makes man to be a being of moral worth?" Many of those who advocate abortion as a solution to some of the terrible problems confronting human society do not, of course, regard the fetus as a human being. They look upon it

as "protoplasmic rubbish" (Philip Wylie),<sup>4</sup> "genetic materials" (Joseph Fletcher),<sup>5</sup> a "blueprint" (Garrett Hardin),<sup>6</sup> a "part of the woman's body" (Havelock Ellis),<sup>7</sup> or something of this kind. But others who will justify feticide--for this, after all, is what abortion actually is--are ready to concede that the fetus is a human being, that it is humanly alive (e.g., Daniel Callahan, who is ready to grant that a fetus is a human being at least after an electroencephalogram shows that brain activity is going on).<sup>8</sup> In fact, medical and biological evidence falsifies any claims that the fetus is not humanly alive, and numerous writers are willing to concede, as does Charles Curran,<sup>9</sup> that the fetus is alive as a fully individuated human entity from the time of implantation, that is, after it is no longer possible for twinning to occur or that two developing blastocysts--merge into one--a process completed between the eighth and the twelfth days after conception. But these writers still defend abortion (if not on request, at least when "indicated" by specifiable medical and psycho-socio-economic reasons) and argue that abortion is not the killing of a person or of an entity meaningfully human, even if it may truthfully be described as a killing of a human being. What this means, and this is a tendency discernible in much of the writing occasioned by the abortion controversy, is that many authors today make a very significant distinction between a human being and a person or a human being who is meaningfully human. They distinguish, in other words, between a human being and what I have called a being of moral worth. For these writers an entity is not a being of moral worth because it is a human being; rather it is such a being because it is, in addition to being a human being, a person or a meaningfully human entity. For all these writers the position taken by Daniel Callahan is paradigmatic: we can make nuanced distinctions among human beings, judging some as subjects of rights protectable by society and others as not being such subjects.<sup>10</sup>

There are, I believe, many problems with this position. The most basic of course is what is it that makes a human being a person or meaningfully human if it is something distinct from his membership in the human species? Who, in other words, is to count as a being of moral worth? Joseph Fletcher attempts to give us some "Indicators of Humanhood" and among them he includes an I.Q. of at least 20 and probably 40, self-awareness, self-control, a sense of time, and the capability to relate to others.<sup>11</sup> Obviously if this is what is meant by a person or a meaningfully human being (a being of moral rights), then many entities who can truthfully be said to be human do not count as beings of moral worth. The thrust of this direction in contemporary thought is, I believe, luminously and explicitly set forth in a provocative essay by Michael Tooley. According to Tooley an entity, in order to be the subject of moral rights (what other authors term a person or a meaningfully human being) must be a being "possessing the concept of a self as a continuing subject of experiences and other mental states" and belief that "it is itself such a continuing entity".<sup>12</sup> It is obvious that a being such as the one described by Tooley is what most people have in mind when they speak of "persons", for the characteristics he lists are characteristics ordinarily attributed to persons.

What is significant about Tooley's position is that it explicitly denies that membership in a species is of moral significance.<sup>13</sup> This denial ought logically to be acceptable to all those contemporary writers (and we can add Gerald Leach<sup>14</sup> and Louis Dupré<sup>15</sup> to those already mentioned) who distinguish between being a human and being a person or "meaningfully" human. In other words, for these writers the reason why a man is a being of moral worth is not something rooted in his being as a man, that is, an entity within an identifiable biological species, but rather in his being a person, and what makes him to be a person is something different from what makes him to be a man.

The position advanced here is that the reason why a man is a being of moral worth is rooted in his membership in the human species. What makes him to be a man simultaneously makes him

to be a being of moral worth. This position, in brief, holds that membership in a species is a matter of serious moral significance, and it is so because the human species constitutes a class of beings who are different in kind from other living species. To be a human being is, of course, to be an animal, but it is to be an animal of a radically different kind from other animals, because of the presence of something within the human animal that is not present within any other animal we know of.

Before attempting to sketch the lines of argument that might help to establish the truth of this position it is first advisable to make some comments about "rights" and the bearers of rights. It is frequently asserted that only "persons" (meaningfully human entities?) are the subjects of rights and that non-personal entities--entities that are simply objects, things, and not subjects--have no rights. For instance, rocks, trees, dogs, cats, cows, and similar objects are usually not regarded as bearers of rights. I submit that our ecological consciousness is pertinent here--there has been, as it were, a lifting of our horizons. It is intelligible to maintain, in other words, that every being, every entity, is a bearer of rights in some significant sense; everything that is a bearer of what might be termed *ontic* rights. These rights, of course, can be recognized and articulated only by special sorts of entities, namely, those capable of intellectual knowledge, and they impose moral obligations only on these kinds of entities. But the fact that a tree is not aware of its own existence does not mean that it has no rights whatsoever and that these rights are not to be recognized by beings capable of recognizing them. It simply means that an entity like a tree might have different kinds of rights from those possessed by other kinds of entities. Trees are surely not bearers of moral worth; they are not irreplaceable, precious, priceless, of transcendent value in themselves.

The most basic right of any entity is to be recognized for what it is, and those entities capable of recognizing entities for what they are have the obligation to do so, to recognize them. Another basic right would be a claim of some sort, even if not inviolable or inadmissible, on those realities that are related to its basic needs, that is, a claim on goods truly perfective of it, goods that enable it to be what it is.

In the previous paragraph mention was made of "obligation". The kind of obligation referred to was a moral obligation, one rooted in the capacity to distinguish between is and ought. A leaf has no obligation, morally speaking, to fall to the ground when it is released from a tree; its falling to the ground is simply a matter of natural necessity. Of all the beings of our experience only men, so far as we know, are beings to whom moral obligations can meaningfully be attributed. Men are, in short, moral beings. By a moral being I mean something different from a being of moral worth, although I believe that these terms are interrelated and that what makes a man to be a moral being is what makes him to be a being of moral worth. A moral being is an entity that is the bearer of moral duties or obligations. We cannot meaningfully say that a rock or a tree or a dog or a cat or a chimpanzee is such an entity. For these beings there is no compelling evidence to lead us to the conclusion that they are capable of distinguishing between is and ought. There is for them no moral imputability or accountability or responsibility. Yet like all entities, these beings are the bearers of what I have termed *ontic* rights. *Ontic* rights, however, impose moral obligations only on men, that is, on entities for whom there is compelling evidence to support the judgment that they are moral beings, that they are entities for whom the distinction between is and ought is meaningful. It is meaningful for human beings to distinguish between is and ought because men are minded entities: as intelligent beings they can come to know what is and to recognize what is for what it is and respond to what is in an appropriate or fitting mode. Moreover, in responding to what is they are capable of self-determination, that is, of making the response their own. This capability is meaningless unless they can respond in ways that are not fitting or appropriate to the demands

placed upon them by what is. A moral being, in other words, is a minded being, and by a minded being is meant a being capable of intellectual knowledge (of understanding what is for what it is) and of making choices that are properly his and not some other agent's.

Men are such entities, and their being entities of this sort is related to what the authors we have been criticizing have in mind when they speak of persons or meaningfully human beings. For a person (or an entity that possesses "meaningful" human life) is indeed a minded entity, that is, a self-conscious and self-determinative entity. Moreover, and this is something that we know by reflecting upon our experiences and coming to an understanding of them, not all men (not all entities that can truthfully be included within the human species) are actually moral beings. We do not think that neonates or infants or those suffering from insanity or many other members of the human species are capable of recognizing what is for what it is and of responding to the demands that what is imposes upon moral beings. Yet the reason why some human beings are capable of all this is rooted in their being human to begin with.

A moral being, we have said, is a minded entity. But what is it that makes or enables an entity to be minded? This, I believe is the nub of the matter. My thesis is that what makes or enables men to be minded entities is the presence, within human beings, of something that is not, so far as we know, present to other entities of our experience. This "something" has been variously named. It is the *ruach* of the Old Testament and the *pneuma* of the New Testament; it is the *nous poietikos* of Aristotle, the *mens* of Augustine, the *anima subsistens* of Aquinas, the *memoire* of Bergson, the *Geist* of Rahner. However it is named it is a principle immanent in man and making man to be what he is; it is a principle of immateriality or of transcendence from the limitations of matter.

But how do we know that a principle of this kind is constitutive of human beings? To answer this question it may be helpful to inquire into what we mean by minded entities. And here some empirical data and the observations of Jose Delgado, the famed Yale neurosurgeon, have special pertinence, particularly when they are linked to certain philosophical and theological notions that have had a long history and have found contemporary expression in the work of men such as Mortimer Adler and Bernard F.J. Lonergan.

First, let us look at the empirical data. There have been recorded instances of feral or "wolf" children, that is, children who have been abandoned or lost in the forest at a very tender age and who have been "adopted" and reared by wild beasts such as wolves. Such children obviously are human beings, members of the human species. When these children have been discovered they have been found totally lacking in any self-consciousness. They do not realize that they are selves, that they are subjects; they have no consciousness or awareness of themselves as enduring subjects of experience. Why? The reason apparently is that they have not been exposed to the process of inculturation or what might also be termed humanization. They have lacked contact with other human beings; they have not encountered in their experience beings who are aware that they are "selves". They have accordingly not been able to develop any kind of interpersonal, intersubjective relationships and through the development of these relationships to come to recognize themselves, to come to understand that they are indeed "selves" or subjects.<sup>16</sup>

Second, let us look at the views of Delgado. He argues that the mind is not, as many writers today maintain, simply the brain--a physical organ that has achieved an incredible degree of complexification in man. He maintains rather, that the mind must be understood in terms of its function, and so understood, it consists in the interrelationships between a brained entity and an environment that is cultured. Thus some entities that possess highly complex brains (e.g., feral children) are not minded entities because they do not interact with a cultural environment. But men are entities who are brains, and who do interact with such an environment and in so doing become



minded. Delgado argues, and from his perspective rightly so, that at birth men are mindless although possessed of brains. They become minded entities (what the writers whom we have been criticizing term persons or meaningfully human beings) by interacting with their environment. This environment includes other men who have constructed a culture or mediate a culture to new entities who have the same kind of brain that they have. To support his argument he points to empirical data that cannot be ignored. For a human being to become minded (personal, meaningfully human in the terminology of many contemporary writers) it is necessary for him to exist within an environment that includes other men and their culture.<sup>17</sup>

Delgado is saying, in short, that a cultural environment is a necessary condition for the emergence of minded entities, and this conclusion seems warranted by the existence of feral or "wolf" children. A cultural environment is apparently a *sine qua non* for the existence of entities actually capable of self-consciousness and self-determination, actually capable of recognizing what is for what it is and of responding responsibly to the demands imposed by this recognition. Moreover, because only brained entities, and entities with a brain of certain complexification, become "minded" by interacting with a cultural environment, it also would seem to follow that a particular kind of brain is also a necessary condition for the existence of entities actually capable of such performances. But are culture and the brain sufficient to explain adequately the existence of such entities?

To answer this question let us first look at one of the conditions seemingly indispensable for the emergence of minded entities, namely culture. A culture is not something subsistent in itself; it is not a phenomenon that occurs by nature or by reason of natural necessity. It is rather an artifact, the creation of entities that do exist "in nature", and these entities are obviously the beings we call men. Cultures "exist" because men exist; man is the culture-building animal. This is something recognized by those who, like William S. Heck, would surely reject the view that man is, in any metaphysical sense, a being of moral worth, a being who is unique, irreplaceable, precious in himself, a value transcending the material universe. Although for Beck and many of our contemporaries man is simply a material entity in no way discontinuous with the rest of the material universe, he is the culture building animal. Beck writes:

life is a web of which man is part and prisoner. . . . What of man, the organism? What is he? What is his origin, his state, and his destiny? Man, we know, is an animal, which like all other animals seeks food, shelter and security, mates and reproduces, who fights off the encroachments of a hostile environment until it is possible to fight no longer. Then like all animals, he dies. But man is unique among animals, for he alone has the ability to build cultures. His growth is not completed by reproduction, nor is it fulfilled by death, because the biological pattern of man has made his nature self-surpassing.<sup>18</sup>

When he says that "the biological pattern of man has made his nature self-surpassing," Beck is saying that something within the makeup of the human animal enables him to surpass or transcend himself and, because of this, build culture. Along with many other writers today, he would argue that the brain (the other *conditio sine qua non* referred to before for the emergence of minded entities) is this enabling factor. And the human brain is an enormously complex organ, consisting of over 10,000 million neuron cells and capable of storing information, reading signals, transmitting messages and explaining many of the activities that human beings do.<sup>19</sup> But the question can legitimately be raised whether everything that human beings do and are capable of doing can be explained sufficiently and adequately in terms of the neurological processes going on within the brain in interaction with the environment. For human beings are not only capable of transmitting messages or signals; they are capable of transmitting the messengers as well. That is,

human beings can share and communicate their lives, their very selves. They are capable of being related to themselves, and this is a very unusual kind of relationship. We speak, and speak meaningfully, of human beings who are "in possession" of themselves; we speak of "self-possessed" persons. Human beings can love one another in the sense that they can value other human beings in and for themselves and not by reason of any benefits to themselves that can be gained. They can "give" themselves to others in love, and in the very action of giving themselves away in love they do not, paradoxically, lose possession of themselves but come to possess themselves in an utterly new way. In fact, it can even be said that a human being who does not possess himself cannot really give himself away in love to another, and reciprocally it seems that a human being cannot truly possess himself, cannot truly love himself, without loving others. Human activities include communion with others; human language, and a language that is not only verbal but includes as well "body" language and human activities, goes beyond communication to communion. Through understanding and love human beings are capable of living in a new way, of existing in a new way. These human activities of possessing themselves, giving themselves away in love and understanding--not only messages, but messengers--are central to the building up of culture.

It is for this reason that it is worth reflecting upon the views of contemporary writers such as Mortimer Adler and Bernard Lonergan, who stand in a long philosophical and theological tradition. What arguments do they marshal for answering our question of what it is that makes man to be a being of moral worth--irreplaceable, precious, priceless and transcending the society of which he is a part.

With Beck and others both Adler and Lonergan agree that man is the culture-building animal. For Adler, man builds culture because he is capable of propositional speech, and he is capable of this because he is capable of conceptual thought. For Lonergan man builds culture because he is the questioning, inquiring animal, the animal who is capable of raising transcendental, as distinct from categorical, questions. What do they mean by this? We can begin with Adler.

Adler argues--and the argument that he advances is, as he himself notes, not one peculiar to himself but is shared by many and has a long history--in two major steps. He first presents arguments to support the distinction between what can be termed perceptual thought and conceptual thought, and then seeks to show that what is called conceptual thought can be explained adequately if and only if there is a power present in the human animal that can properly be said to be immaterial.

Adler will grant, along with many contemporary philosophers, that animals other than men "think", if by thinking we mean the ability to learn from experience, to generalize, to discriminate, to solve problems by trial and error and even to make inductive inferences from empirically learned cues.<sup>20</sup> This kind of thinking may be termed perceptual thought in order to distinguish this type of thinking from conceptual thought. But how are percepts, the products of perceptual thought, different from concepts, the products of conceptual thought? Both are unobserved and are thus, Adler holds, inferred factors or psychological constructs. Both, consequently, should be described in terms of the functions they are postulated to perform. A percept, if so described, is an acquired disposition or learned ability to recognize the kind of thing a perceived object is--an ant, a dog, a rabbit, a man. A concept, on the other hand, is an acquired disposition to perform this function, but in addition is a disposition to understand what that kind of thing is like. The concept of dog, for instance, is chiefly and primarily a disposition to understand what dogs are like, that is, to understand what it is that makes a dog to be a dog rather than some other kind of being. Because of this it is likewise a disposition to recognize this or that particular perceived entity as a dog, and

in performing this function it is doing what a percept is intended to do. A further distinguishing characteristic between a concept and a percept is that concepts can fulfill their function when the perceptible objects are not actually being perceived, whereas percepts are operative only when the particular objects in question are actually perceived.<sup>21</sup> In brief, Adler writes, "all perceptual abstractions--in animals and in men--are dispositions that are operative only in the presence of perceived particulars, but human concepts, even when they relate to perceived particulars, are not operative only in the perceptible presence of these particulars; and not all human concepts relate to perceived particulars."<sup>22</sup>

To support further this distinction between a percept and a concept Adler argues that a word, in itself a meaningless physical mark or sound, acquires its denotative and connotative meaning, enabling it to serve as a designator (pointing to a concept in the mind) rather than as a mere signal or percept (pointing to a neuronal state of affairs in the brain), not from the perceived object itself (otherwise why would different words such as poodle, dog, animal all be used to designate the same object?), "but from the whole class of objects to particular instances of which it is applied as a name."<sup>23</sup> Since a class of objects is not itself an object of perception--for all that we can perceive is a particular object or instance of a class--the ability to understand what a class is involves more than the ability to recognize that a particular instance of that class is an instance of that class. In other words, the designative meaning (conceptual meaning) of our common names cannot be explained by reference to any factor or construct within the reach of our perceptual powers. In short, "common or general names that function as designators of perceived objects but have different connotative and denotative significance as designators, get their different meanings from the perceived objects according as these objects are differently conceived."<sup>24</sup> In addition our concepts refer to realities that are not perceptible at all, for instance, justice, loyalty, triangularity, etc.

Although concepts and conceptual thinking cannot be explained on the basis of the psychological processes of perception--processes that we share with other animals--might it be possible for concepts to be explained by changes occurring in the neurons of the brain? Many contemporary writers think that they can, and advance what has been named the "identity hypothesis". This is a "materialist" position inasmuch as it holds that the conceptual thinking necessary for man to build cultures can be explained adequately without attributing to the human animal any immaterial principle or power. But it is not materialistic in the crude sense of reducing psychical activity to physical activity, for it does admit that the mind and the brain are analytically distinct, even though they are existentially or entitatively the same.<sup>25</sup>

But Adler and others<sup>26</sup> maintain that the power of conceptual thought cannot be adequately accounted for by the identity hypothesis. This power is, in Adler's words, the power

that man exercises in naming things, in uttering sentences that can be true or false, in making judgments about their truth or falsity in the light of relevant evidence and arguments, in stating inferences and giving reasons, and in developing . . . mathematics, art, science, history, philosophy, religion, the state and all the other institutions of civilized life.<sup>27</sup>

It is in virtue of the power of conceptual thought that we are able to be related to our own selves, to be capable of reflective knowledge. It is only because we have this ability that we can truly be said to possess ourselves and to give ourselves away to other human beings in love. It is this power that makes it possible for us to enter into communion with others, to live a life of

dialogue, not monologue. It is this power that enables us to be minded beings, for it is the antecedent condition making it possible for an entity with a particular type of brain to reflect or interact with a cultural environment. And this power, Adler and the philosophical tradition that he represents maintain, cannot be accounted for in terms of material reality, in terms of neuronal changes occurring within the brain. Why not? The argument to support this inference, Adler writes,

hinges on two propositions. The first proposition asserts that the concepts whereby we understand what different kinds of classes of things are like consist in meanings or intentions that are universal. The second proposition asserts that nothing that exists physically is actually universal; anything that is embodied in matter exists as an individual and as such it can be a particular instance of this class or that. From these two propositions, the conclusion follows that our concepts must be immaterial. If they were acts of a bodily organ such as the brain, they would exist in matter, and so would be individual. But they are universal. Hence they do not and cannot exist in matter, and the power of conceptual thought by which we form and use concepts must be an immaterial power, i.e., one the acts of which are not the acts of a bodily organ.<sup>28</sup>

This, in essence, is the line of thought developed by Adler. It is an argument that calls attention to the radical power underlying man's cultural capacities. It is the power "from which," as another writer puts it, "conjecture springs". It is the root source of man's ability, as this author continues, "to form mental images of things and situations which do not yet exist but which may be found, brought about, or constructed by his efforts. To this root capacity the term *intellectus* is traditionally applied."<sup>29</sup> It is because of this power of conceptual thought, of *intellectus*, of *mens*, that man is that being "capable of a superior realizing, an opening and keeping open that derives from an ability to perceive things as having an existence independent of their proximate affective references; and so, seeing beyond each immediate need of physiological valence, able to carve out for himself, so to speak, a transcendent environmental niche always a little wider and more supple than the biologically given."<sup>30</sup> This is a power that transcends matter and hence requires us to infer the presence within man of a principle of immateriality.

Lonergan's thought focuses on the character of human existence as a life of inquiry, of questioning. For Lonergan the human animal is driven from within to question continually the meaning of his existence. It is this dynamism that makes culture possible; it is the antecedent condition rooted in man's being that makes progress possible. His thought is lucidly summarized in a passage in which he describes the dynamism that moves the human animal ever onward in his quest for meaning, truth, and responsible action. He writes:

Spontaneously we move from experiencing to the effort to understand; and this spontaneity is not unconscious or blind; on the contrary, it is constitutive of our conscious intelligence; just as the absence of the effort to understand is constitutive of stupidity. Spontaneously we move from understanding with its manifold and conflicting expressions to critical reflection; again, the spontaneity is not unconscious or blind; it is constitutive of our critical rationality, of the demand within us for sufficient reason, a demand that operates prior to any formulation of a principle of sufficient reason; and it is the neglect or absence of this demand that constitutes silliness. Spontaneously we move from judgments of fact or possibility

to judgments of value and to the deliberateness of decision and commitment; and that spontaneity is not unconscious or blind; it constitutes us as conscientious, responsible persons, and its absence would leave us psychopaths.<sup>31</sup>

Although many questions could be asked about this passage, its major thrust is clear. Human civilization, culture, progress are possible because man is the being who asks questions, who inquires, seeking to understand his experience, testing his understanding of that experience for its truth, and acting responsibly in accord with a true understanding of himself and his world. The dynamism that is responsible for this movement from experience to understanding to truth to responsible action, "far from being the product of cultural advance, is the condition of its possibility".<sup>32</sup>

As a questioning, inquiring being man raises various kinds of questions. Some are meaningful and can be given quick, final, definitive yes-no answers: Is it raining outside? What is the chemical composition of salt? These are what Lonergan terms "categorical" questions, and they play a large role in human culture. But there are other questions, questions that are meaningful, that man raises, and these questions can only be answered partially; a final, definitive response can never be given simply because the questions reach out for or intend the unknown whole or totality of which our answers reveal only a part. Questions of this kind, called "transcendental" by Lonergan, move us from what we know already to seek what we do not yet know.<sup>33</sup> The capacity to raise these questions--and among them we might include such questions as the true meaning of parenthood, justice, honor, loyalty, man himself, God--discloses to us something about the human animal. About his entitative makeup. Man is for Lonergan characterized by an unrestricted, pure desire to know, and to know all that is. He is this kind of being because he is capable of raising questions, including transcendental questions, and of coming to know, truthfully even if only partially, their answers. But to a being of this kind man must be a being whose constitutive makeup requires the presence of intellect, of a power surpassing or transcending the conditions of matter.<sup>34</sup>

The considerations brought to our attention by contemporary writers like Lonergan and Adler are, of course, subject to intelligent debate. The argument that they advance (and that are advanced by the philosophical tradition of which they are representatives) to support the position that human culture and the emergence of a minded entity demands, not only a cultural environment and a brain of a particular kind, but also the presence within man of an immaterial intellect can surely be questioned--but again, is not the ability to question this position itself indicative of the meaning of being human?

Geneticists like Theodozios Dobzhansky maintain that to be a man, that is, to be a human being, one must have a human genotype.<sup>35</sup> Yet Dobzhansky admits that "the genotype of the human species is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for cultural development."<sup>36</sup> What is incontrovertible is that "the human organism has a constitutional capacity to react to objects . . . without the specific content or form of the reaction being in any way physiologically given, and on the basis of this capacity "the human attains levels of organization beyond those open to animals".<sup>37</sup> We can ask wherein this "constitutional capacity" consists, and answer that it consists in man's being as the questioning, inquiring animal, the animal capable of asking transcendental questions. And this pure desire to know and to think conceptually can be explained adequately only if rooted in a principle of immateriality, a principle that does indeed make man capable of transcending the entire material universe.

Thus, in answer to the question, "What makes man to be a being of moral worth?" I reply that it is his being as a man, that is, in being an entity whose constitution or makeup includes a principle

of immateriality. It is this principle that ultimately makes him to be a man and to be minded, to be capable of building culture or entering into intersubjective relationships, of determining his own life through his own choice, of possessing himself and the world in understanding, and of giving himself away in love to other human beings while remaining fully in possession of himself.

It is in virtue of his immateriality that a human being is what he is, namely a person. It is in virtue of his immateriality that he is a being of moral worth and capable of becoming a moral being. In order for a human being to develop the capacities that are his by reason of what he is, a brain and a cultural environment are necessary. But neither the brain nor a cultural environment makes men to be a being of moral worth. What makes him to be this is something else that is constitutive of his being as a man, and it is something that is not material. To be man is to be this kind of being; and by definition to be a member of the human species is to be a man. Any entity that counts as a member of the human species, therefore, is this kind of being. Membership in the human species is of critical moral significance simply because human animals are different kinds of animals. They are different, not because of culture or brains, but because of who they are, that is, beings ultimately minded because within them is a principle of immateriality, of transcendence. Members of this species are beings of moral worth not by reason of anything that they do or achieve, but by reason of what they are.

Consequently, criteria sufficient to establish that an entity is a human being, a member of the human species, are sufficient to establish that that entity is a being of moral worth--a being who is priceless, precious, irreplaceable, valuable in itself, transcending or surpassing the material order, an entity that must be considered not merely as a part related to some larger whole but only as a whole. What are these criteria? I submit that the criteria for establishing whether an entity is a member of the human species are conception by human parents, possession of the human genetic code, and individuated existence. All these criteria are unquestionably verified, according to incontrovertible biomedical evidence by any human fetus after implantation. Such entities are fully individuated both with respect to their parents and any possible siblings, are alive and humanly alive because they are identifiably human and not non-human. Even prior to implantation we know that we are faced with an entity that is individuated with respect to its parents and that is humanly alive; we do not know with absolute certitude whether this entity is individuated with respect to any possible siblings, but it presumptively is stochastically.

Many entities other than fetuses can be positively identified as members of the human species that do not exhibit the properties that we associate with persons or "meaningfully" human beings, if by the latter we understand entities capable of entering into intersubjective relationships, aware of themselves as enduring subjects of experience, and so forth. Among these we can include neonates and infants, the insane and the autistic, those in comatose conditions. But all these entities are members of the human species; all are human beings. and what makes them to be human beings is what makes them to be beings of moral worth.

I submit that this is the only intelligent stance that we can take if justice is to reign and if human life is to be really human. Human existence would be intolerable without trust, and trust is possible only if we are ready to accept our fellow species members as we trust that they will accept us, namely as beings of moral worth.

In concluding this paper perhaps we can return to the abortion controversy. In its Roe and Doe decisions the Supreme Court explicitly recognized that the mother-to-be is a being of moral worth, a being entitled to privacy and a being whose rights demanded protection by society. What makes that mother-to-be a being of moral worth is her humanity, her membership in the human species. It is not by reason of something that she possesses or by reason of something that she has done or

by reason of the humanization or inculturation process that she is such a being. She is this kind of being, that is, an entity of moral worth, by reason of what she is: a human being. The fetus she carries is, like her, a fellow species member, a fellow human being, and so likewise are neonates and infant and imbeciles and morons and many others who are, for various reasons, incapable of entering into meaningful intersubjective relationships or of experiencing themselves as enduring subjects of experience. These entities are our fellow species members, as are too the scum of the earth, the bums and hoboes and neo-Nazis and terrorists. As fellow human subjects they put claims on us who are capable of recognizing them for what they are, human beings like ourselves, beings of moral worth.

From a religious perspective we might say that what makes man to be a being of moral worth is that he is the image of God, the living *eikon* of the God who is love and who made man so that he can share and communicate his life to a being like unto himself. To be a human being is to be, in this religious perspective, the treated logos or word of the living God. We are the created words that the Uncreated Word became. What makes us to be these *logoi theou* is, at root, what makes us to be the *zoa logika* of Aristotle, the animals who can not only speak but even enter into communion with his fellows and, through communion with them, encounter the One who has uttered them.

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## Notes

1. See John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), pp. 97-105.
2. *Roe v. Wade*. *The United States Law Week* 41 LW (1-23-73), X, 4227.
3. *Ibid.* X and XI, 4228-4229.
4. Philip Wylie, *The Magic Animal* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 272.
5. This is the term Fletcher uses to describe the developing fetus in his article, "New Beginnings of Life", in William Hamilton, ed., *The New Genetics and the Future of Man* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 76-91.
6. Garrett Hardin, "Abortion or Compulsory Pregnancy?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (1968), p. 250.
7. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 6, *Sex in Relation to Society* (Philadelphia: PA: Davis, 1910), pp. 607-608.
8. Daniel Callahan, *Abortion: Law, Choice, and Morality* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 409 ff.
9. Charles Curran, "Abortion: Law and Morality in Contemporary Catholic Theology", *The Jurist* 33 973, 180.
10. See Callahan, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-389. Here it is instructive to read the penetrating analysis and criticism of Callahan's position offered by Paul Ramsey in his "Abortion: A Review Article", *The Thomist* (1973), 174-226, in particular 176-188.
11. Joseph Fletcher, "Indicators of Humanhood", *The Hastings Center Report* 2 (1972), 1-4.
12. Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2 (1972), 44, 48, 55.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

14. See Gerald Leach, *The Biocrats* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1970). Leach obviously considers the fetus a human being (see p. 161) but in his advocacy of infanticide (pp. 102-104) he equally obviously considers that not only fetuses but even infants are not subjects of moral worth.
15. Louis Dupré, "New Approach to Abortion Problem", *Theological Studies*, 34 (1973), 481-488.
16. See Joseph Sing, *Wolf Children and Feral Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1962).
17. Jose Delgado, *The Physical Control of the Mind* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 32-59.
18. William S. Beck, *Modern Science and the Nature of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 17.
19. On the brain, see Steven Rose, *The Conscious Brain* (New York: Knopf, 1974).
20. Mortimer Adler, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes* (New York: Meridian, 1968), p. 157.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.
26. For example, Etienne Gilson, Jacques Maritain, Martin Heidegger, and Henri Bergson. Bergson, of course, attacked what he termed the cinematographic characteristics of rational thought, but he clearly posited within man a power enabling him to reach true judgments about reality.
27. Adler, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.
29. John Deely, "The Emergence of Man" in *The Problem of Evolution: A Study of the philosophical Repercussions of Evolutionary Science*, edited by John N. Deely and Raymond J. Nogar (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1973), p. 136. The internal citation is taken from Theodozios Dobzhansky, *Mankind Evolving* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 338.
30. Deely, *art. cit.*, p. 135.
31. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 18.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
33. On the distinction between categorical and transcendental questions see *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 105-106; Lonergan, *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 638-639, 272-275, 683-685; see also David Tracy, *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 125-128.
34. Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 638-639, 683-685.
35. Dobzhansky, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
36. Dobzhansky, *The Biological Basis of Human Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 28; cf. pp. 119-120.
37. T. Parsons and E. Shils, ed., *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 10 and 17. Cited in Deely, *art. cit.*, p. 135.



## Chapter X

# Reason as Norm

Vernon J. Bourke

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Samuel Clarke presented his version of the ethical position which takes reason as the norm of ethical judgment. This shows that an ethics based on right reason as norm is not at all foreign to British philosophy. Nevertheless, Thomas Hobbes had made a mockery of reason, and it was in opposition to the forces of *Leviathan* that Clarke wrote:

Some things are in their own nature Good and Reasonable and Fit to be done, such as keeping Faith, and performing equitable Compacts, and the like, and these receive not their obligatory power, from any Law or Authority, but are only declared, confirmed and enforced by penalties, upon such as would not perhaps be governed by right Reason only. Other things are in their own nature absolutely Evil, such as breaking Faith, refusing to perform equitable Compacts, cruelly destroying those who have neither directly nor indirectly given any occasion for any such treatment, and the like; And these cannot by any Law or Authority whatsoever, be made fit and reasonable, or excusable to be practiced. Lastly, other things are in their own nature indifferent.<sup>1</sup>

This theory of ethical right reason has a long tradition, running from Plato through Greek Stoicism, through classic Roman and medieval writers of the Christian, Islamic and Jewish faiths, through modern European philosophers on the Continent and in England, to twentieth-century ethicists as speculatively diversified as Brand Blanshard, André Lalande, Henry Veatch, and Maurice Mandelbaum.<sup>2</sup> My purpose here is not to deal with the history of right reason ethics but to offer a formulation of this theory which may have some contemporary relevance. The point of this preamble is to disabuse people of the notion that this use of reason is confined to one school of philosophy, is the adjunct of some special religious group, or is necessarily associated with natural law ethics. The right reason approach to ethics is probably the theory that is most widespread in the history of ethics.

### General Description of Right Reason

As I see it, right reason consists in the intelligently appraisable and suitable relation between moral agent and moral action. As such, reason is a ratio or "a : b" relation with a discoverable meaning. If "a" is a husband and "b" is his wife, then the ratio that they constitute implies moral and ethical judgments. This is not a simple notion which can be used automatically and without thought to solve moral problems. As we shall see, the theory can be very complicated when employed by the ethical expert to justify general rules of good living, but it is much less complex as employed by the ordinary moral agent to make his own practical decisions about proposed concrete acts. In the present section we shall deal with right reason in precision from this distinction between the ethical and the moral.

Consider a smoker who is thinking of giving up cigarettes. He has a certain amount of knowledge of himself and some knowledge of the practice of cigarette smoking. He knows that he is alive, that he is able to think things over, and that he can make decisions about what to do and what not to do. He knows that he is married to a wife whom he has promised to cherish, and that he has some young children who are dependent on him physically and mentally. He also knows that he no longer feels well when he rises in the morning. These and other items of personal knowledge make up this man's total conception of himself.

This is what we mean by the "moral agent". He or she is a real person, of course: but known to self or to an ethical observer under the limitations of a given set of cognitions.<sup>3</sup> Admittedly, what-the-agent-is may always be imperfectly grasped by human knowers. Yet, we have to live with this imperfection, whether we are subject to it as personal agents or as ethical observers. No person can be expected to do more, or better, than the actual circumstances permit. We cannot expect a primitive to analyze himself psychologically, but we can expect him to think of himself as a man capable of certain actions.

Of course, the foregoing few sentences do not completely describe what a moral agent is; they are a device to get the reader to consider what such a notion would be. Most examples discussed in ethical writings are not sufficiently fleshed out with facts to supply a basis for judgment. Take the famous example of the young man who wonders whether to stay at home to care for his mother or to enlist in the army to defend his country.<sup>4</sup> This conflict in apparent duties is not open to solution unless we know more about the case. We know practically nothing about this young man, e.g., whether he is in good health, has finished his education, or has brothers or sisters. A hundred such questions would not exhaust the data required to think reasonably about a given problem or specific type of action.

Right reason requires, first of all, adequate knowledge of who the agent is and of the real surrounding conditions. By the same token, we need to know the character of a proposed action before we can judge that it is suitable or unsuitable. To continue with our earlier example, the act of smoking was unknown to the classic moralists of ancient or medieval times. There is no point to trying to find a text in the bible or in Aristotle that deals with smoking: this is a modern vice. Most people who smoke cigarettes might say that they are fully aware of the kind of action that it is; yet few would understand the physiological and psychic responses to cigarette smoking. Most would know that various health experts have recently warned against the threat to good health posed by the use of cigarettes: but a smaller number would see some connection between this warning and their own lives. On the other side, there is the steady stream of advertising which presents cigarette smoking as the practice of people who are young, sophisticated, beautiful, and able to enjoy the finer things. "What smoking means to me," could be the theme of a long and revealing paper.

In addition to the agent and his proposed act, the third variable in the complexus of right reason is the relationship of fitness or unfitness between these two terms.<sup>5</sup> This brings us to the heart of the matter. How does one decide that a certain act is fit to be performed voluntarily? In order to answer this question we must utilize the distinction between moral and ethical discourse.

### **Right Reason in Personal Moral Decisions**

Decisions as to one's own proposed (or performed) moral actions may be made without having studied ethics. Of course, ethics may provide a more adequate background for personal decision but, fortunately, one can direct one's life in complete ignorance of moral philosophy. Some sort of general moral convictions are acquired by practically all humans who live beyond infancy. These views are learned from parents, church, school, reading, the advice of others, personal experience and other sources. Sometimes, such a set of notions is popularly called a "philosophy of life."

Our ordinary grasp of such views is not really philosophical in the technical sense. Examples of acquired moral convictions are: "Do unto others what you would have them do to you", or "Always think of yourself first", or "When in doubt always do what is safe", or "Eat, drink, and be merry", or "Respect your elders", and so on. People will often give such maxims as excuses when

questioned about moral decisions or actions. These popular rules are not necessarily right, or acceptable to all persons, nor are they always able to withstand the test of rational scrutiny. At any thoughtful or critical point in a person's life, some or all of them may be critically examined by their holder and either retained or rejected.

Taking up again the example of the cigarette smoker, consider that his physician has just told him that if he does not stop smoking he will probably die ten or fifteen years ahead of his expected time. The smoker goes home and thinks it over: should he stop or not? Is it better to enjoy smoking for a life expectancy of twenty-five years, or to stop having this pleasure and live for thirty-five or forty years? If he says, "You only live once," meaning: get all the pleasure that you can out of the one life that you have, then he may decide: I will not stop smoking. To keep the discussion on the moral level, let us stipulate that this man is sincere. He thinks that he is doing the best thing, sticks to his decision, and continues to smoke. As far as he knows, his concrete judgment to keep on smoking is right.

Now, we may well ask what is the nature of the rightness in this judgment. In the definite situation in which the smoker finds himself, there is some sort of relation between the individual smoker and his decision to continue smoking. Note that the action under consideration in this section is not the general practice of smoking, although that is pertinent; rather, it is the particular decision: to stop or not to stop. This man decides not to stop, because he thinks that this decision is suitable or fitting. If he regarded it as unfitting, he would not ordinarily make this decision.

I am inclined to think that a personal judgment as to whether a proposed moral act is fitting or not is made in much the same way that one judges the fit of a suit, or the fit of a nut for a bolt. This is not to say that moral standards are simply technical standards, but that the function of appraisal is similar. If while repairing a machine I try to screw a number two nut on a number three bolt, I can discern the relation of unsuitability by simple inspection. Let us make the case more complicated: say I have a number three bolt but all of my nuts of this size are threaded differently from the bolt. I can force one of these nuts on with a wrench but, in doing so, I strip much of the thread from the bolt. This bad-fitting nut will hold, but only temporarily. What I now have to decide is whether it is better to use this bad-fitting nut temporarily, or to take time off and go to the store for a good-fitting nut.

Suppose I judge that I should use the bad-fitting nut for the present. This practical judgment as described may not be directly moral, although I feel that something that has been given this much thought and time must have some moral value. In any case, many people would dismiss the example as technical and morally trivial. But notice what would develop if my repair was being made on the brakes of a customer's automobile. Am I right in risking the use of a bad fitting nut which may slip off and endanger the driver? I must think over the whole situation and carefully judge whether using this nut is really a suitable decision in the circumstances.

We might introduce the view of another observer who has all the pertinent facts and knows that the use of this bad-fitting nut is quite safe. What this observer would know is that, statistically, this sort of nut will work in all but one of ten thousand instances. This means that there is objective, practical certitude to back up my decision. There is a kind of ideal objectivity to the ratio between this proposed action and the agent in this concrete situation. I myself, however, would ordinarily have to take my decision as to fitness within the limits of my own knowledge and endowments. If there is some expert whom I may consult concerning the use of such nuts, then clearly I should do so. Whether merely technical or also moral, my decision cannot achieve complete objectivity, but if I desire to act as well as I can then I must do my best to approach objectivity as far as this is

possible. Many rules, such as the golden rule, are but devices to help the agent to think of how other persons would view his problem, and thereby to remove his decision from pure subjectivity.

Although the term "conscience" is used quite diversely in twentieth-century ethics: the original Latin *conscientia* meant "with knowledge." To perform an action with knowledge meant to use one's store of moral information in order to form a judgment about what one should or should not do, in a concrete situation. In the thirteenth century, when both ethics and moral theology reached a high state of development in the first universities, conscience was not regarded as a special power or moral sense, nor was it considered a source of religious conviction. Conscience designated the particular practical judgment a man makes for himself when he decides: "This is a good act for me to do, here and now, under this set of circumstances." So used, conscience belongs to the process of personal right reasoning that we have been examining. It is the practical judgment which usually precedes the final decision to act or not to act. Though by no means infallible, moral conscience is one's best available judgment as to what is concretely good or bad in a moral situation. So defined, conscience does not wholly determine the agent's action, for it is quite possible to judge, "This is not a suitable, or right, act for me to do," and then to proceed to do the act. Such a process does not display good intelligence, for it is not very smart to act against one's best judgment, but that is what immoral activity usually involves.

There is no generality to the judgment of conscience; and that is true of the whole process of personal right reason. Suppose I decide: "I should give up smoking today." This is my conscience and no other's. To use this judgment as a base for advising others would be to change the conscience-judgment into a general rule of the form: "Everyone in circumstances similar to mine ought to give up cigarette smoking." So expressed, this is no longer my conscience. The counselling judgment is actually a rule of general moral knowledge; if philosophically established, it can be an ethical judgment. We recall the difference previously indicated between the ethical and the moral.

Personal right reason has no generality, for I can make personal decisions only for myself, and cannot do the actions of another person. Hence, there is no way of teaching this kind of thinking. Ethical writers in the classical tradition spoke of this as the order of prudential judgment. It is not ethics but the personal application of ethical knowledge or of any other kind of universal moral convictions to the moral evaluation and direction of one's own problems in life.<sup>6</sup> Even the casuistry of the moral theologians of the Renaissance was not the same as personal moral reasoning. For example, a monk who "solves a case" stemming from a marital problem is dealing with, what is for him, a purely hypothetical difficulty. He is not using personal right reason, but is doing counselling.

The fitness or suitability that is the basis of personal right reason is not general. What is right in this individual moral instance is not expressible in terms of anything else. Such a fit is unique. One may use a variety of words with meanings which are identical or close: good, right, suitable, fitting, and so on, but the concrete ratio between a given agent in a definite situation and his or her proposed action is not open to general description. On this, G.E. Moore was correct in speaking of the naturalistic fallacy;<sup>7</sup> he erred only in locating this fallacy in ethics. It is indeed wrong to think that one's own moral judgments can be explained in terms of something else: they cannot, for they are unique and incommunicable. Whenever one generalizes a moral judgment, it is removed from the sphere of individual morality into the sphere of universal ethics. Hence, right reason does function in personal moral reasoning, but on this level, one cannot explain it to another. To this extent, moral intuitionism is sound.

The distinction of act-utilitarianism and rule-utilitarianism<sup>8</sup> is helpful, although it is not quite the same thing as our differentiation of the moral and the ethical. Quite probably, pioneer utilitarians like John Stuart Mill did not realize that it is one thing to attempt to justify a particular moral act by looking to its consequences, and another thing entirely to attempt to establish a rule or universal practice in terms of which the action would be judged. It is quite possible for me to think: "I should not bet on this horse race, because I would be risking money needed by my family," while also being convinced that: "Race betting in general is not opposed to the welfare of my community." The possibility of logical conflict between rule and act judgments is an indication of their diversity.

We are beginning to see that it might also help to distinguish act-deontology from rule-deontology. One may believe that God prompts him from within his consciousness to do individual act A, or to omit act B, without regard for considerations of utility. Such a person is like Abraham or Joann of Arc in that they need no rules. For them ethics is but an academic game, for why should they reason if God had done this for them? Another kind of deontological thinker may see his duty in terms of laborious processes of reasoning terminating in general rules of behavior after the fashion of Immanuel Kant. Such a thinker may remain a deontologist, but he will focus on universal maxims rather than individual acts.

This contemporary distinction between rule-judgment and act-judgment can help to clarify the right reason theory. In my view the only possible kind of ethics is rule-ethics.<sup>9</sup> Act-utilitarianism seems to attempt to analyze the problems of moral conscience. A person who makes moral judgments about his own acts is not functioning in ethics. Likewise, the person who attempts to judge the individual act of another man, such as Truman's ordering the bombing of Nagasaki, is not doing the work of ethics.

The judgment, "This individual act is fitting", is an act of appraisal which cannot and need not be further explained in itself. One may relate it to other judgments, such as a general rule that, "This kind of act is fitting", but such generality must be established by general right reason.

### **Rule Judgments as Norms of Ethics**

My intention is not to argue here, that I intuit a set of ethical rules conveyed to me by God, or by my Church, or by the sanction of social science. What I do propose is both that there are certain general judgments as to what it is suitable for any man to do or avoid, and that the philosophical task of ethics is to set up, examine and revise these general judgments which function as ethical rules.

Right reason here--and this is where it most properly belongs--is the relation of suitability between a universal conception of man as a moral agent and a universal conception of a certain kind of action possible to man. Ethics never offers solutions to personal problems. To see this, let us take first a very general judgment: "It is bad to injure another person, voluntarily." The validity of this judgment is founded on the understanding of the meaning of "injury" and of "person." Of course, we must know also what voluntary means, but that is required for any kind of ethics.

As far as "injury" is concerned, we could use the first definition in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, though any other standard of current usage would do. "Injury. I. Damage or hurt done or suffered; detriment to, or violation of, person, character, feelings, rights, property, or interests, or the value of a thing." Such a definition will forestall questions about whether it is morally good to perform a surgical operation, and so on. An injury consists in a real harm, knowingly and deliberately inflicted; it is the contrary of a real benefit to a person.

It is more difficult to grasp the meaning of "human person," for this requires that one think of a universal; and recent philosophy has tried all sorts of devices to dodge the issue of universals. Besides being a thinking and freely choosing animal, man is the focal point for all sorts of relations to other beings that modify his moral personality. Smoking, for instance, makes life more complicated for man today; so do automobiles, atomic bombs, and visits to the moon. A man who is a medical doctor, for example, has a special status by virtue of his profession. He takes on special rights and obligations: he is permitted to do things that other men are not, and at times he is expected to go out of his way to help others to an extent not required in some other professions. The notion of a moral agent is not transcendental, but varies with various kinds of circumstances, even though these conditions remain specifically universal. What all doctors are expected to do is different, on the one hand, from what all men ought to do, and on the other, from what Doctor X ought to do. To be a man is not simply to exemplify some logical category, but to exist in the cultural context of definite places and times. In a former century surgeons drew blood from their patients on the theory that they were helping them, though today such blood-letting might be deemed an injury. However, understanding the realities behind the terms, one can know that it is unfitting for a person to injure another voluntarily--in much the same way that one knows that a square is never a circle.

How we know this ratio of unsuitability seems to depend on an extrapolation from experience of ourselves. That is to say, I am more immediately aware of my own good than I am of that of another person. Early in life, I learn from personal experience and from the teaching of others that certain things and acts are good for me. These are items on at least three levels: i.e., biological goods, such as life, health and strength; sensory goods, such as enjoyment in the use of physiological functions, the use of the sense powers to satisfy curiosity, the avoidance of pain, and freedom of physical movement; and intellectual goods, such as indefinitely great understanding of reality, freedom of decision, social intercourse with other persons, the conviction of personal accomplishment, and the pursuit of artistic, cultural, and religious ideals. These and other such values are first appreciated in relation to self. I do not see how it could be otherwise, for how could I first know what it means to another person "to be alive" and only later realize that I cherish my own life? Value judgments, I think, are necessarily egocentric at the beginning of axiological awareness, and to this extent, idealistic hedonism is correct.

Initially, however, there is little ethical value in my appreciation of biological, sensory, and intellectual goods-for-me. With the development of a more reflective attitude, which in my opinion comes in the early years of childhood for most people, one begins to make the transfer to a more altruistic viewpoint. Much effort is needed to become convinced that a certain kind of good is just as important to another person as to myself, for we all remain partial victims of the egocentric predicament. Indeed, entire books in contemporary philosophy are devoted to convincing us that other people are personal: it is even more difficult to come to see that my neighbor's life, or freedom, or intellectual integrity, is just as valuable to him or her and to me, as my own is to me.

Here, again, I would stress the issue of nominalism as opposed to realistic universalism, though of course this takes us beyond ethics. I do not understand why a nominalist need be an altruist. If one is fully convinced that all men are discrete individuals, without any common nature, and simply called "men" for the sake of linguistic convention, why should one place the same value on the life of another man as one places upon one's own? To my mind, the most compelling reason why I should not hurt or kill another is because he is the same kind of existent as I--and I do not want to be hurt or killed. It is true that I would not inflict unnecessary pain on a beast: nor would I feel right about destroying anything in nature without reason; but this is far different from

my repugnance to inflicting injury on another person. The ratio of man to man is not at all the same as the ratio of man to dog.

This is what Kant was trying to get at with his various formulations of the categorical imperative. These formulae were not intended to provide material knowledge of what is good for oneself. Kant seems to have thought that one knows his duty from an intuitive presentation of inner consciousness. With the categorical imperative, he was arguing that one must extend his thought horizons beyond the confines of subjective interests in order to think ethically. It was in this sense that he wrote:

Humanity itself is a dignity: for man can be used by no one (neither by others nor even by himself) merely as a means but must always be used at the same time as an end. And precisely therein consists his dignity (personality), whereby he raises himself above all other beings in the world, which are not man and can, accordingly, be used--consequently, above all things. Even as he therefore cannot give himself away for a price (which would conflict with the duty of self-esteem), so can he likewise not act counter to the equally necessary self-esteem of others as men, i.e. he is bound to give practical acknowledgment to the dignity of humanity in every other man.<sup>10</sup>

If "humanity" were but a nominal class or externally imposed name, this passage would make no sense. Kant insists on the ethical importance of realizing that there is "humanity in every other man." It is because he is not a nominalist that Kant can argue to the ethical dignity of all men in the world. He would agree, I am sure, that the ratio of man to man is real and of great significance for the establishment of ethical awareness.

Obviously, the way we understand mankind depends on parts of philosophy that are not ethics. It also depends on our other experiences and on other sciences and disciplines. Let us admit, however, that we have a general, though imperfect, grasp of what it is to be human. This knowledge is always open to improvement, but is enough to enable us to distinguish man as moral agent from beasts, machines, and other agencies. With this information, the ethical philosopher tries to judge that certain kinds of actions are suitable, under certain kinds of circumstances, for the sort of agent that man is. Conversely, he attempts to judge that other practices are unsuitable for any man, in specific circumstances. These broad judgments of fitness or unfitness are capable of explanation in terms of items other than moral good or evil. That is why there is a study known as ethics. It is also the reason why the naturalistic fallacy does not apply to right-reason ethics, though it applies, as I have suggested, to judgments of personal moral reasoning.

Ethical fitness is a real relation. Take the example of a thirty-year old man (M) and a ten-year old boy (B). If M is B's father, there is an existing, understandable, legally demonstrable connection between M and B, such that it is suitable for M to be in charge of, and to support, B. This "father : son" ratio stems neither from some law passed by a state legislature, nor from some command issued by the will of a legislator. That a parent should take care of his offspring is a conclusion from the sum total of human experience and reflective thinking. I would not call it an intuition, for that suggests either that the judgment is too easy, or that it is no judgment at all, being simply a quick vision or instinctive prompting. On the contrary, an elaborate process of reasoning may lead to the personal conviction that parents should care for offspring.

Since this sort of ethical rule is universal (though not in the sense of applying to all humans: for some are not parents), it will appear to suffer some exceptions. In one instance, the father may

be physically or mentally unable to care for his child. Whether this be regarded as an exception, or as an instance in which we have a putative parent who is not really a parent in the full sense because unable to function *in loco parentis*, the matter of terms is not important. We can either say that ethical rules admit of exceptions, or that apparent exceptions do not come under the accepted meaning of the terms. Ethical rules are norms for the instances to which they are understood to apply; for other kinds of actions, they are not norms.

Let us consider the more developed example of a soldier who returns home from war to find that his wife has a new-born son. After a year of providing financial and fatherly support to this child, he discovers that the child was actually fathered by another man. This changes the ratio between the soldier and the child. The normative ethical rule still stands, namely: "parents should care for their children," but the newly discovered fact of non-relationship simply removes this man from the class of fathers. He is no longer under the obligation that he thought he had to care for this child. He may, indeed, continue to do so and may even create for himself an assumed obligation to serve as a proxy father, but this obligation does not arise from the real ratio of father to son. Besides real relations, there are other bases, such as promises, for ethical suitability. It does not seem to me, however, that the ethical validity of an assumed obligation is as meaningful as that based upon a real ratio. For this reason, I recoil at the notion of duties to oneself.

It is sometimes argued that our normative ethical judgments depend wholly on the special cultures in which we live.<sup>11</sup> This would mean that, were we living in an African tribe in which the obligation to support children is held to fall on the maternal uncles, we would not recognize the suitability of the father supporting his son. To this, two things should be said. First of all, it is possible to arrange social and family life according to patterns different from those of European-American society. Such shifts in arrangements would mean the assumption of a somewhat different set of duties, based upon a different cultural structure. In fact, some European parents transfer the care of their children to nannies and boarding-schools in a manner that would seem odd to the American parent. Certainly, there are different ways of discharging one's obligation as a parent. Even in an African tribe, however, the father would feel entitled to protest, if he found that his son was being allowed to starve by his wife's brothers. In the second place, I would risk the charge of ethnocentrism by challenging the rightness of family structures in some primitive societies. Customs are not always ethically approvable; that is one of the reasons why we need ethics. It seems to me that the linkage of real paternity is a relation that is closer and more properly the source of moral obligation than is that of uncle to nephew. This is precisely the sort of suitability that stands out when one reflects on the facts.

Just as the ratio "2 : 8" is more intelligible and meaningful than the ratio of "2 : the color blue", so the father-son relation is more meaningful than the uncle-nephew ratio. I would be in general agreement with the way in which Richard Price explains this reality of moral relations:

The agreement of proportion between certain quantities is real and necessary, and perceived by the understanding. Why should we doubt, whether the agreement of fitness also between certain actions and relations, is real and necessary, and perceived by the same faculty? From the different natures, properties, and positions of different objects result necessarily different relative fitnesses and unfitnesses; different productive powers; different aptitudes to different ends, and agreements and disagreements amongst themselves. What is there absurd or exceptional in saying, likewise, that from the various relations of beings and objects, there result different moral fitnesses and unfitnesses of action; different obligations of conduct;



which are equally real and unalterable with the former, and equally independent of our ideas and opinions?<sup>12</sup>

In the continuation of this passage, Price argues that there is something morally unsuitable in the assignment of eternal misery as a punishment for innocent children.<sup>13</sup> I would agree that there is a basic repugnance between innocence and punishment. This is but another example of the type of unfitness observable in the natures of things. It is not an instance of intuiting the evil of a concrete action, as some nominalists have interpreted Price to mean. Rather, it is a case of the intelligent appraisal of two terms with universal meanings (innocence and punishment), and a consequent refusal to judge that the one is compatible with the other. This can be stated as an ethical norm: "Innocence is never a reason for the assigning of punishment."

### **Reason Based on Reality**

To attempt to explain ethical fitness, however, is like trying to teach a person the meaning of equality. The child who looks at a simple equation and asks what "equals" means is not ready for algebra. For several hundred years a good many philosophers have presumed that no relations are real. They have supposed universals to be fictions, and generalization a sort of imaginative exercise. As a consequence, philosophers have had much difficulty in deriving "ought" from "is". However, one is not obliged to take the views of David Hume as the philosophical gospel. His atomic interpretation of sense data has impeded the development of moral philosophy for too long, particularly in English-speaking countries. This was well appreciated by as unlikely a historian as John Dewey, when he wrote:

The sensationalistic theory of the origin and test of thought evoked, by way of reaction, the transcendental theory of *a priori* ideas. For it failed utterly to account for objective connection, order and regularity in objects observed. Similarly, any doctrine that identifies the mere fact of being liked with the value of the object liked so fails to give direction to conduct when direction is needed that it automatically calls forth the assertion that there are values eternally in Being that are the standards of all judgments and the obligatory ends of all action.<sup>14</sup>

Dewey, of course, did not want to revert to idealism, but he realized that ethicists have to face the need for an intellectual framework which will enable them to appreciate, as Dewey puts it, "the objective connection, order and regularity in objects observed." This is what Hume refused to see, the operational method that Dewey went on to develop for ethics is but one way of attempting to find a viable middle way between the extremes of nominalism and Platonic realism.

What ethics needs sorely, at the present point, is not deontic logic, game theory, or panegyrics to love. It needs a vision of reality, including man and his whole environment, that will provide a foundation for ethical judgment. In such an ontological-epistemic theory, an important place should be given to the "ratios" or real relations that tie together men and other things, and that provide the tendencies, needs, and satisfactions inherent in a humanized world. These "objective connections", to use Dewey's phrase, make up the ontological foundation for oughtness. Such relations are not mere items of knowledge or deliverances of deductive logic; they constitute the actual dispositions of things, and of the cognitive, affective and volitional sides of the human

reality. They give rise to inclinations, exigencies, and aspirations which are more real than any mentally constructed grouping of sense data.

This ontological framework of related realities cannot be grasped simply by sense perception. Intelligence, understanding, and reason are required to know it.<sup>15</sup> What is known thus is rational, in the sense of including any number of intelligible "ratios" which give ethical meaning to man's world. The knower, for his part, must be rational, in the sense of being able to reason to universal judgments concerning the "oughts" implied in the structure of reality. From both sides, objective and subjective, reason is the key to normative ethics.

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## Notes

1. Samuel Clarke, *Discourse Upon Natural Religion* (1705-1706) reprinted in L.A. Selby-Bigge, ed., *British Moralists* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), II, 9, pp. 105-84.

2. Although they approach ethics from quite different theoretical bases, these thinkers have advanced, each in his own way, the use of right reason in ethics: Brand Blanshard, *Reason and Goodness* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961); for a new appreciation of Lalande, see Italo Bertonni, *Il Neo illuminismo etico di André Lalande* (Milano: Marzorati Editore, 1965); Henry B. Veatch, *Rational Man* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964); *Human Rights. Fact or Fancy?* (Baton Rouge & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); and Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Phenomenology of Moral Experience* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1955). On the history of right reason ethics, see Guido Fasso, *La legge della ragione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1964); or my *History of Ethics* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 87-108.

3. The point to putting the "ethical observer" in the foregoing is to keep open the extension of the example, so that it is not confined to personal knowledge of oneself. See Bourke, "The Ethical Role of the Impartial Observer", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 6 (1978), 279-91.

4. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1946), pp. 40-1, and the comment in John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 176.

5. Thus Mandelbaum (*op. cit.*, p. 181) writes: "all moral judgments . . . constitute a single *genus* [and the] characteristic which defines that genus is that all moral judgments are grounded in our apprehension of relations of fittingness or unfittingness between the responses of a human being and the demands which inhere in the situation by which he is judged."

6. Possibly one of the greatest mistakes made by both situationists and phenomenologists is their identification of personal moral reasoning with ethics. This is like confusing carpentry with architecture: the works are related but not identical.

7. *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1903), chapter I.

8. See Michael D. Bayles, ed., *Contemporary Utilitarianism* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), where most of the articles use this distinction. In an earlier version of this approach, J.J.C. Smart spoke of "extreme" and "restricted" utilitarianism. His article from the *Philosophical Quarterly*, VI (1956), 344-54, is reprinted, with some revisions, in Bayles' anthology, pp. 99-115.

9. This opposition of mine to act-ethics is not shared by all Catholic writers on the subject; see R.L. Cunningham, "The Direction of Contemporary Ethics", *New Scholasticism*, XXIX (1965), 332-48.

10. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, Part II of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James Ellington (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 127-28.

11. Cf. Duncan MacRae, Jr., "Utilitarian Ethics and Social Change", *Ethics*, LXXVIII (1968), 188-98.

12. Richard Price, A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals, chapter VI in *British Moralists*, pp. 172-73. See the excellent analysis of Price's argument in A.S. Cua, *Reason and Virtue* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966).

13. No doubt, Price had in mind the Augustinian problem of the punishment of babies who die without baptism. On Augustine's ethics, see G.W. Forell, *History of Christian Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), pp. 154-80.

14. This is from Dewey's famous chapter, "The Construction of the Good", in *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Putnam's, 1929), p. 261. More recently, Morton White, in *Toward Reunion in Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 19- 56), has called for a return to a more realistic (he calls it "platonic") theory of universals.

15. See the remarkable French book: Georges Kalinowski, *Le Problème de la vérité en morale et en droit* (Lyon: Emmanuel Vitte, 1967). This work offers a highly sophisticated version of a Thomistic theory of right reason, developed in terms of a metaphysically grounded axiology. Cf. *The Monist*, 66 (1983) no. 1, the whole issue is devoted to "Right Reason in Western Ethics", with articles by ten ethicists.



**Chapter XI**  
**A Contemporary Natural-Law Ethics**  
*Germain Grisez*

In 1959, I began working on ethical theory by studying St. Thomas on natural law. Over the years, I made the modifications required by modern and contemporary problems, phenomenological descriptions of moral realities, linguistic clarifications of relevant expressions, and a constant effort at critical reflection and systematization. Other philosophers, especially Joseph M. Boyle, Jr., and John Finnis, have been helping with this work. The theory we are developing is a--not the--contemporary natural-law ethics.

This paper only summarizes the theory. For its further explanation and defense, those interested may look into works listed in the bibliography.

Like consequentialist, Kantian, and other natural-law theories of morality, ours is cognitivist but not intuitionist. We think there are true moral principles from which the most specific moral norms can be deduced and by which judgments of conscience can be criticized. The theory we propose is less familiar than its consequentialist and Kantian alternatives, and can be initially situated by reference to them.

Consequentialist theories are teleological; they try to ground moral judgments in human well-being. Kantian theories are deontological; they try to ground moral judgments in the rational nature of the moral subject, whose inherent dignity they emphasize. Teleology appeals to many because it does not absolutize morality but subordinates it to a wider human flourishing. But deontology also has its appeal, for it tries to defend the absolute dignity of human persons, especially against any attempt to justify using some as mere means to the goals of others.

Our theory tries to combine the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of teleology and deontology. Morality, we hold, is grounded in human goods--the goods of real people living in the world of experience. Still, each person's dignity is protected by moral absolutes, and it never is right to treat anyone as a mere means.

### **The Idea of Basic Human Goods**

In the widest sense in which the word "good" is applied to human actions and their principles, it refers to anything a person can in any way desire. But people desire many things--e.g., pleasure, wealth, and power--whose very pursuit seems to empty a person and to divide persons from one another. However, are other goods--e.g., knowledge of the truth and living in friendship--whose pursuit of itself seems to promote persons and bring them together. Goods like these are real parts of the integral fulfillment of persons. We call them "basic human goods"--basic not to survival but to fulfillment.

Some goods are definite objectives, desired states of affairs--e.g., losing twenty pounds, getting an enemy to surrender, or successfully completing a research project. But in themselves the basic human goods--e.g., health, peace, or knowledge of the truth--are not definite objectives. Pursuit of these goods never ends, for they cannot be attained finally and completely. Interest in them goes beyond particular objectives sought for their sake, for they transcend states of affairs which instantiate them. It follows that persons acting alone and in various forms of community can contribute to the realization of such goods and share in them, but can never become wholly identified with them.

But if the basic human goods are not definite objectives, how do they guide action? By providing the reasons to consider some possibilities choice-worthy opportunities. An enemy's surrender becomes an objective to be pursued because of the belief that it will contribute to peace; the loss of twenty pounds is sought, perhaps for the sake of health; particular projects of theoretical research are carried out in the hope that their results will advance knowledge. These reasons for choosing and acting provided by basic human goods do not require any prior reasons. The prospects of human fulfillment held out by peace, health, knowledge, and so on, naturally generate corresponding interests in human persons as potential agents.

Thus, human practical reflection begins from the basic human goods. They are expanding fields of possibility which underlie all the reasons one has for choosing and carrying out one's choices. This fact gives human life both its constant and universal features, and its diversity and open-endedness. The basic human goods explain the creativity characteristic, in our experience, only of human beings. They provide the framework of ideals necessary for the unfolding in history of human cultures.

### **Which Are the Basic Human Goods?**

Some goods, though important, are not basic, for they are not intrinsic to personal fulfillment. No external good--nothing a person makes or has, considered as distinct from the person--can be basic. Individuals and communities always seek such goods for ulterior reasons, which culminate within persons.

Even goods of a more personal and interpersonal character are not yet basic if they can be desired only for their instrumental value. Liberty, for example, is a great good, but not basic; by itself it does not fulfill persons, but only enables them to pursue various forms of fulfillment. Thus, people want liberty to pursue the truth, to worship as they believe right, to live in friendship, and so on.

"Enjoyment" refers to a variety of states of consciousness, which have in common only that they are preferred to their alternatives. A preferred conscious state is at best part of a person's sharing in some good; in other words, it is part of the instantiation of a good. Thus enjoyment is not basic. But since "enjoy" refers to conscious participation in one or more of the basic goods, one needs no ulterior reason to enjoy oneself.

Both reflection on one's own deliberation, and observation of the diverse ways in which people organize their lives, make it clear that there are several basic human goods. For example, truth and friendship plainly mark out distinct fields of concern. Neither is reducible to the other nor to any more fundamental concern. This diversity of basic human goods is no mere contingent fact. Rather, since such goods are aspects of the integral fulfillment of persons, they correspond to the inherent complexity of human nature, both in individuals and in various forms of association.

As bodily beings, human persons are living animals. Life itself--its maintenance and transmission--health, and safety are one category of basic human good. As rational, human beings can know reality and appreciate beauty and whatever intensely engages their capacities to know and feel. Knowledge and aesthetic experience are another category of basic good. As simultaneously rational and animal, human persons can transform the material world by using realities, beginning with their own bodily selves, to express meanings and/or serve purposes within human cultures. The fullness of such meaning-giving and value-creation is still another category of basic good--excellence in work and play.

Everyone shares to some extent in the preceding goods prior to any deliberate pursuit of them. Life, knowledge, and various skills are first received as gifts of nature and as parts of a cultural heritage. But children quickly come to see these goods as fields in which they can care for, expand, and improve upon what they have received. Life, knowledge, and excellence in performance are basic human goods insofar as they can be cherished, enhanced, and handed on to others.

There is another dimension of human persons. As agents through deliberation and choice, they can strive to avoid or overcome various forms of conflict and alienation, and can seek after harmony, integration, and fellowship. Choices themselves are essential parts of this relational dimension of persons. The already given aspects of personal unity and interpersonal relationship provide grounds for this dimension, yet it goes beyond what is given.

Most obvious among the basic human goods of this relational dimension are various forms of harmony between and among persons and groups of persons: friendship, peace, fraternity, and so on. Within individuals, similar goods can be realized as inner peace, self-integration, authenticity. And beyond human relationships, there can be harmony between humans and the wider reaches of reality and its principles. Concern for this last good underlies such diverse activities as believers' worship and environmentalists work to save endangered species.

The relational goods are instantiated by a synthesis of elements--feelings, experiences, beliefs, choices, performances, persons, and wider realities. Ideally, harmony enhances its diverse elements, but, in fact, conflict is seldom overcome without attention to the elements synthesized. Defective forms of harmony often are built upon a significant level of conflict. For example, established, working relationships between exploiters and exploited are a sort of peace, yet radically defective. Such defective harmonies, as harmonies, are intelligible goods; they can serve as principles of practical reasoning and action. Yet they are mutilated forms of the basic human goods.

### **The First Moral Principle**

To understand right and wrong, one must bear two things in mind. First, the possibilities of human fulfillment are indefinite and always unfolding, for there are several basic human goods, and endless ways of serving and sharing in them. Second, human beings, even when they work together, can only do so much. No one can undertake every project and serve in every possible way. Nor can any community. Choices must be made.

Compulsive behavior, ineptitude, and the unwelcome results of mistakes and bad luck are not moral wrongs. Only in choosing can people go wrong morally. On any ethical theory, moral norms tell people how to choose.

On the account of human goods outlined above, it might seem hard to see how anyone can choose badly. Without reasons for choosing grounded in basic human goods, there would be no options; yet the choice of an option is never rationally necessary--otherwise, there would not be two or more real options. Thus, on the preceding account, every choice is grounded in some intelligible good, and to that extent is rational, yet no choice has a monopoly on rationality. Moreover, virtually every choice has some negative impact on some good or other. Thus, no choice can be made without setting aside some reason for not making it.

Partly in response to this real complexity, consequentialists try to distinguish good from bad choices by their effectiveness in maximizing good and minimizing evil. But consequentialism is unworkable, for although one may be able to commensurate the measurable value and disvalue promised by different instantiations of goods; one cannot commensurate the goods and bads which

make diverse possibilities choice-worthy opportunities, for these goods and bads go beyond what is definite at any moment of choice.

But if consequentialism is unworkable, how can basic human goods mark the moral distinction between choosing well and choosing badly?

There are two ways of choosing. First, one can accept the inevitable limitations of choosing and regard any particular good one chooses as a mere participation in the wider good; choosing thus, one sees the good one chooses as part of a larger and ever-expanding whole, and chooses it in a way which allows for its harmonious integration with other elements of that whole. Second, one can choose in a way which unnecessarily forecloses some further possibilities of fulfillment; one treats the particular good one is realizing here and now as if it were by itself more complete than one knows it to be.

Choices made in the first way are well made, for they are entirely in accord with reality; choices made in the second way are badly made, for they are partly at odds with reality. This distinction between choosing well and choosing badly is the first moral principle. It can be formulated: In voluntarily acting for human goods and avoiding what is opposed to them, one ought to choose and otherwise will those and only those possibilities whose willing is compatible with integral human fulfillment.

This formulation can be misunderstood. "Integral human fulfillment" does not refer to individualistic self-fulfillment. Rather, it refers to the good of all persons and communities. All the goods in which any person can share also can fulfill others, and individuals can share in goods such as friendship only with others.

Nor is integral human fulfillment some gigantic synthesis of the instantiations of goods in a vast state of affairs which might be projected as the goal of a U.N.O. billion-year plan. Ethics cannot be an architectonic art in that way; there can be no plan to bring about integral human fulfillment. It is a guiding ideal rather than a realizable idea, for the goods are open-ended.

Moreover, integral human fulfillment is not a supreme good, beyond basic goods such as truth and friendship. It does not provide reasons for acting as the basic goods do. Integral human fulfillment only moderates the interplay of such reasons so that deliberation will be thoroughly reasonable.

### **Specifications of the First Moral Principle**

One might like the ideal of integral human fulfillment but still ask How can the formula proposed above be a serviceable first moral principle? How can any specific moral norm be derived from it?

None can be derived directly, but the first principle does imply intermediate principles from which norms can be deduced. Among these intermediate principles is the Golden Rule (or universalizability principle), for a will marked by egoism or partiality cannot be open to integral human fulfillment. And this intermediate principle leads to some specific moral judgments--e.g., Jane who wants her husband Jack to be faithful plainly violates it by sleeping with Sam.

Thus, there is a route from the first moral principle to specific moral norms. This route can be clarified by reflection on a case such as the intuitively obvious relationship between the first principle and the Golden Rule, and between the Golden Rule and specific norms of fairness.

Human choices are limited in diverse ways. Some limits are inevitable, others not. Among inevitable limits are those on people's insight into the basic goods, ideas of how to serve them, and



available resources. Insofar as such limits are outside people's control, morality cannot require that they be transcended.

But some limits on choices are avoidable; one can voluntarily narrow the range of people and goods one cares about. Sometimes this voluntary narrowing has an intelligible basis, as when a person of many gifts chooses a profession and allows other talents to lie fallow. But sometimes avoidable limitations are voluntarily set or accepted without such a reason.

Sources of limitations of this kind thus meet two conditions (1) they are effective only by one's own choices; and (2) they are non-rational motives, not intelligible requirements of the basic human goods. Normally, the acting person either can allow these non-rational limiting factors to operate or can transcend them. For they are one's own feelings or emotions, insofar as these are not integrated with the rational appeal of the basic goods and communal fulfillment in them. Such non-integrated feelings offer motives for behavior yet are not in themselves reasons for choosing.

The first principle of morality rationally prescribes that non-integrated feelings be transcended. The Golden Rule forbids one to narrow interests and concerns by a certain set of such feelings--one's preference for oneself and those who are near and dear. It does not forbid differential treatment when required by inevitable limits or by intelligible requirements of shared goods.

Non-rational preferences among persons are not the only feelings which incline people to prefer limited to integral human fulfillment. Hostile feelings such as anger and hatred toward oneself or others lead intelligent, sane, adult persons to choices which are often called "stupid", "irrational", and "childish". Self-destructive and spiteful actions destroy, damage, or block some instantiations of basic human goods; willing such actions obviously is not in line with a will to integral human fulfillment.

Behavior motivated by hostility need not violate the Golden Rule. People sometimes act self-destructively without being unfair to others. Moreover, revenge can be fair: An eye for an eye. But fairness does not eliminate the unreasonableness of acting on hostile feelings in ways that intelligibly benefit no one. Thus, the Golden Rule is not the only intermediate principle which specifies the first principle of morality. It follows that an ethics of a Kantian type is mistaken if it claims that universalizability is the only principle of morality. Respect for persons--treating them always as ends and never as mere means--must mean more than treating others fairly.

Not only hostile feelings, but positive ones can motivate people to do evil--i.e., to destroy, damage, or impede an instantiation of some basic human good. One can choose to bring about evil as a means. One does evil to avoid some other evil or to attain some ulterior good. In such cases, the choice can seem entirely rational, and consequentialists might commend it. But, as I explained above, the appearance of complete rationality is based on a false assumption that human goods do not matter except insofar as they are instantiated and can be commensurated.

Thus, it is unreasonable to choose to destroy, damage, or impede some instance of a basic good for the sake of an ulterior end. If one makes such a choice, one does not have the reason of maximizing good or minimizing evil--there is no such reason, for the goods are non-commensurable. Rather, one is motivated by different feelings toward different instances of good. In this sort of case, one plays favorites among instantiations of goods, just as in violating the Golden Rule one plays favorites among persons.

And so, in addition to the Golden Rule and the principle which excludes acting on hostile feelings, there is another intermediate principle: Do not do evil that good may come.

Because this principle generates moral absolutes, it often is considered a threat to people's vital concrete interests. But while this principle may be a threat to interests, the moral absolutes it

generates also protect real human goods which are parts of the fulfillment of actual persons; and it is reasonable to sacrifice important concrete interests to the integral fulfillment of persons.

The Golden Rule and the other principles just enunciated shape the rational prescription of the first principle of morality into definite responsibilities. Hence, we call such intermediate principles "modes of responsibility." In all, we distinguish eight of them.

## **Human Action**

Specific moral norms are deduced from the realm of responsibility. But one cannot explain this process without first saying something about human action.

Many people, including philosophers, unreflectively assume a rather simple model of human action, involving three elements (1) a possible state of affairs which a potential agent wants to realize; (2) a plan to realize it by causal factors in the agent's power; and (3) the carrying out of a more or less complex set of bodily performances to bring about the desired state of affairs.

This model of action is inadequate, yet it does refer to something: to what Aristotle called making as distinct from doing. Kant saw the inadequacy of this model; he knew there is more to moral life than the pursuit of one goal after another. But because he separated the noumenal realm from the world of experience, Kant did not challenge at its own level the oversimplified account of human action. Yet reflection upon our experience as persons living our own lives will verify a more complex model.

As explained above, the basic human goods are broad fields of human possibility. Interest in these goods underlies the desire to realize any particular goal. For persons, whether acting as individuals or in groups, projects first appear as interesting possibilities, worthy of deliberation and perhaps of choice, because they seem to offer ways of uniting persons as open to fulfillment with goods which are intrinsic aspects of that fulfillment. For instance, beyond the specific objectives of any course, dedicated teachers want their students to become mature and cultured persons; beyond all his strategic objectives, a statesmanlike military commander hopes to contribute to a more peaceful and just world.

Thus, from a moral point of view, actions primarily are voluntary syntheses of acting persons or communities with basic human goods. There are at least three ways to make such a synthesis. These constitute three senses of "doing" which, from the moral point of view, are irreducibly diverse.

First, one acts when one chooses something by which one directly participates in a good. For example, when one gives a gift as an act of friendship, one chooses to realize a certain state of affairs--giving the gift--as a way of serving the good of friendship, the very fulfillment of self and other in this form of harmony, which is instantiated by giving and receiving the gift.

Second, one acts in a different way when one chooses something not for itself but as a means to an ulterior end. What is chosen is not willed as an instantiation of a basic good, but as something through which one expects to bring about an instantiation of a good. For example, many people work only to get their pay. The chosen means need not be such that it would never be chosen for its inherent value. For business purposes one sometimes takes a trip one might also take as a vacation.

Third, one acts in a still different way when one voluntarily accepts side effects incidental to acting in either of the two prior ways. Here one is aware that executing one's choice will affect, for good or ill, instances of goods other than those on which one's interest directly bears. Although one does not choose this impact on other goods, one foresees it and accepts it--sometimes

reluctantly (e.g., when one accepts the loss of a diseased organ to save one's life), sometimes gladly (e.g., when one accepts the bonus of making new friends when one agrees to participate in a philosophy workshop).

Because the three sorts of willing distinguished here relate acting persons to goods in different ways, they ground three distinct meanings of "doing". The significance of the distinction emerges most clearly in negative cases. One may reveal shameful truths about another out of spite, or to arouse shame and provide an occasion for repentance, or as a side-effect of preventing harm to some other, innocent person. In all three cases, one can be said "to destroy a reputation". But the three types of action destroy reputation in different senses.

### **The Derivation of Specific Moral Norms**

Specific moral norms can be derived from mode of responsibility. That is plain from the work of many philosophers with the principle of universalizability and from the examples given above pertaining to other modes. I shall now try to clarify the process of derivation.

At its heart is a deduction which can be formulated in a categorical syllogism. In the simplest case, the normative premise is a mode of responsibility, which excludes a certain way of willing toward relevant goods. The factual premise is a description of a kind of action; it indicates what willing which bears on basic human goods would be involved in doing an action of that kind. The conclusion is that doing an act of that kind is morally wrong. Actions not excluded by any mode are morally permissible; those whose omission would violate some modes are morally required.

Many ways of describing actions, especially with a focus on results, do not reveal what is necessary to derive a moral norm. For example, if willing is defined as any behavior of one person which causes the death of another, the description is insufficient for moral evaluation. Descriptions of actions adequate for moral evaluation must say or imply how the agent's will bears on relevant goods. Such descriptions indicate which of the three sorts of doing, distinguished above, will be involved in an action.

Not all the modes of responsibility apply to all three sorts of doing. Universalizability does. Parents who show affection for a favorite child but are cold toward another violate the Golden Rule in a doing which immediately instantiates the good of familial fellowship. Superiors who assign harder jobs to subordinates they dislike and easier jobs to subordinates they like violate universalizability in choosing means. Dormitory residents who party through the night while others try to sleep but complain when others make noise during daytime hours are unfair in accepting side effects.

Thus accepting side effects of one's choices can be wrong if one does it unfairly. Similarly, even without unfairness to anyone, someone excessively attached to some good can go wrong in accepting grave side effects--for example, the aging, champion boxer who ruins his health in trying to retain his title.

However, one cannot act at all without accepting some bad side effects. In any choice, one at least devotes a certain part of one's limited time and other resources to the pursuit of a limited good and leaves unserved other goods for which one might have acted. Hence, it is impossible to have a general moral principle entirely excluding the willing of every negative impact on a basic human good. One sometimes can accept bad side effects as inevitable concomitants of a fully rational response to the intelligible requirements of goods.

Thus, the principle that evil may not be done that good may come applies only to the choice of a means to an ulterior end, not to the acceptance of side effects. Sometimes the results of doing

an evil and of accepting a bad side effect can be quite similar, yet the acceptance of the side effect, if not excluded by some other mode of responsibility, will be permissible. For example, a choice to kill a suffering person, whether by a positive performance or by a purposeful omission, is morally excluded, as a case of doing evil that good may come. But a choice to limit or terminate burdensome and costly treatment, with death accepted as a side effect, need not be wrong. The treatment of free choice in the next section will help explain why differences in willing have such great moral significance, even when the results are quite similar.

Actions can be described more or less fully. If a limited description of an action makes it clear that it involves a choice to destroy, damage, or impede some instance of a basic human good, then the wrongness of any action which meets that description is settled. Additional factors may affect the degree of wrongness, but further description of the act cannot reverse its basic moral quality. For this reason, moral norms derived from this mode of responsibility can be called "moral absolutes". For example, an absolute norm forbids killing one innocent person to prevent that person causing several others from being killed by a mob.

Different modes work differently, so not all specific norms are absolute. Universalizability can exclude as unfair an action proposed under a limited description, yet allow as fair an action which includes all the elements of that description together with some other morally relevant features. For example, fairness demands promise keeping, whenever the only motive for breaking a promise is of the sort whose operation promises are meant to exclude. But someone who has another reason to break a promise--for example, that keeping it would have such grave consequences that even those to whom it was made would agree it should be broken--may break the promise without violating the Golden Rule.

In general, specific norms based on universalizability are non-absolute. That may not appear to be so, since ordinary language sometimes builds the moral specification into the act description--e.g., by limiting "stealing" to the wrongful taking of another's property. However, instances of justifiable taking can include all the elements which are present in unjustifiable taking; the addition, not the subtraction, of relevant features makes the taking justifiable.

### **Free Choice, Personal Identity and Character**

Classical moral philosophers sought the wisdom to live good lives. By their standard, the ethical theory summarized thus far is inadequate. For being a good person is more than conforming each of one's acts to an appropriate moral norm.

One makes a choice when one faces practical alternatives, believes one can and must settle which to take, and deliberately takes one. The choice is free when choosing itself determines which alternative one takes. True, factors beyond one's control provided options and limited them. But, if free, only one's choice determined which option one would adopt.

The particular goal realized by a successful action is sensibly good and experienced as such, but the appealing goodness with respect to which one determines oneself in choosing to do that action is intelligible and transcends that experience. For example, recovery from a particular illness is sensibly good; health, to which one determines oneself in choosing to do what is necessary to get well, is intelligibly good. In many successful human actions, the goods concretely realized can also be realized by natural processes or spontaneous human acts without choice; by contrast, the sharing in and service to goods to which one determines oneself by choice can only occur in one's self-determining choice.

As self-creative, free choices transcend the material world. They are not events or processes or things in the world; they must be distinguished from the performances which execute them. The performances of particular acts come and go, but a choice, once made, determines the self unless and until one makes another, incompatible choice. Self-determination through choice means that the self is actualized and limited; one's orientation toward further possibilities is more or less settled. By choices, one not only brings about instantiations of goods, but participates in definite ways in the basic human goods.

There are large choices, which put one in the position of having to carry them out by many small choices. Examples of large choices are to become a philosopher, to get married, and to take up photography as a hobby. Some large choices can be called "commitments". To make a commitment is more than to adopt a long-range goal. Commitments bear directly upon goods such as religion, justice, friendship, authenticity, and so on. Since these are interrelated, any commitment will somehow bear on all of them. And since they include interpersonal harmony, every commitment joins one to a particular person or group.

The first moral principle requires willing in line with integral human fulfillment. Such willing must meet the conditions for effective and consistent participation in basic human goods. Without an integrated set of upright commitments, one cannot participate in goods effectively and consistently. Therefore, each of us must discern which commitments are personally appropriate, make and integrate them, and faithfully carry them out.

Some aspects of personal identity are given: One has a certain genetic make up, is brought up in a certain culture, and so forth. But the matrix of moral self-identity is one's free choices; mature people define themselves by their commitments. Still, a morally mature, good person is more than a set of upright commitments. For to faithfully carry out upright commitments, the whole personality must be developed and limited in line with them; they must shape feelings, beliefs, experiences, modes of behavior, skills, and so on. Thus, a good person is one whose whole self is formed by a comprehensive set of upright commitments.

Such a person has good character, whose facets are called "virtues." Since there are many ways of distinguishing facets of character, there are many classifications of virtues. But however classified, virtues are moral fruits, not moral principles. For virtues are only parts of a personality shaped by the carrying out of morally upright commitments, and such commitments are upright because they arise from and are shaped by propositional principles of practical reasoning and of morality.

## **The Way of the Lord Jesus**

Describing the good person is easy; living a good life often seems impossible. The good we achieve and enjoy is mutilated and threatened by ineptitude, failure, breakdown, ignorance, error, misunderstanding, pain, sickness, and death. We sometimes freely choose to violate our own moral truths; we never perfectly fulfill our commitments. Perhaps we could live better private lives if we had the support of a good society, and we also need a good society because the human is naturally social. But there are many wicked people in the world, and powerful people seem especially likely to be wicked. Thus, every political society constitutionally compromises with systematic injustice and other sorts of immorality. All humankind lives in slavery, though some are always only slaves, while others sometimes also play the role of master.

Philosophical reflection seems unable to explain this situation and to show the way to freedom. Immorality, precisely insofar as it is rooted in truly free choices, is inexplicable and

unpreventable. Apart from immorality, the most repugnant aspects of the human condition are epitomized by death, which seems natural and inevitable. Wrestling with the mystery of the human situation, ancient and non-Western philosophers ignore free choice, and modern and contemporary Western philosophers deny it. Almost all try to evade the reality of death by making some sort of rationally indefensible distinction between the morally significant human person and the human organism doomed to die.

The Christian gospel, I believe, offers a more adequate account of the situation. According to this account, God is a communion of three persons, who created human persons so that they might share in divine communion and live in human fellowship. In creating, God promised to forestall death, naturally inevitable for the human organism as such, if men and women cooperated with the divine plan. But from humankind's beginning wrongful free choices blocked the formation and development of an inclusive human community, constitutionally uncompromised by evil. And so God permitted nature to take its course and humans to taste death, at least partly, so that they might experience the wretchedness of their fallen condition, and be eager to escape it.

Human liberation, according to the gospel's proposal, can be gained in two stages by any who try desire it. One of the divine persons became the man Jesus, who lived a morally unblemished human life. In doing so, he not only provided a unique example of how to live uprightly in the broken human situation, but also made Himself available as the head of the human community God had planned from the beginning. All are invited to make faith in Jesus and his cause the central commitment of their lives. In making such a commitment, the gospel teaches, Jesus' disciples enter not only into fellowship with one another but into the communion of the divine family.

The Gospel teaches Christian, that if they live their lives to implement their faith in Jesus, they will live the best human lives possible in this broken world. Following the way of the Lord Jesus, individual Christians can become good people, and on the basis of their common bond with Jesus, they can work together to build up a decent community in the Church and in their Christian families.

Yet this first stage of liberation is incomplete, since the upright must suffer at the hands of the wicked and all must suffer the human misery which culminates in death. The second and final stage of liberation requires a divine act of re-creation. This re-creation, according to the gospel, began with Jesus' resurrection from the dead, and will be completed by the raising up of all who die in faith, and their reunion in an unending divine-human fellowship, protected forever from the wicked.

If the Christian gospel is true, the normative ethical theory outlined in the previous sections remains adequate. The basic human goods remain, though they unfold in unexpected ways. The issues of responsibility remain, though they generate many specifically Christian norms, to govern actions people without faith either could not think of at all or would not think of as choice-worthy.

Most important, the Christian need not accept an Augustinian or Thomistic version of neo-Platonism, with its supposition that the human heart is naturally insatiable by human fulfillment, and naturally drawn to fulfillment in the Beatific Vision of God. For faith does not substitute a supreme instantiation of a supernatural good for integral human fulfillment.

Rather, it holds out the hope of an unending marriage feast. In this communion of divine and human persons, all the basic human goods will be instantiated without the defects imposed by the broken world and the limits imposed by death. And the more-than-human fulfillment which is naturally proper to God also will be enjoyed alone by His adopted sons and daughters.

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theological account of the ultimate end of human persons; chapters twenty-five and twenty-six explain the specificity of Christian ethics.

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## Chapter XII

# Ethics and Prudence

*Patrick J. Coffey*

This paper will make some clarifications about the reasoning process of normative ethics (henceforth referred to as ethics) and prudence and the relation existing between them. Ethics is taken as a type of impersonal or disinterested reasoning which terminates in general prescriptions about morally appropriate human behavior. Prudential reasoning is taken as a personal process which terminates in appropriate human choice. In large part the study presumes a traditional natural law framework for doing moral philosophy. In that sense the study may be understood as a kind of metaethical analysis of prudence and ethics in "traditional" natural law theory.<sup>1</sup>

### **Prudence**

Although the term prudence is now often used without a moral meaning to signify a self-interested action performed intelligently,<sup>2</sup> it has been used traditionally to name the principal virtue through which a person becomes moral. Prudence also has been used to signify the actual reasoning process a person uses in making him/herself moral. In its most complete sense prudential reasoning is part of a person's practical moral wisdom. This study considers prudence in this latter and broad sense.

Man's moral foundation is relational and is situated in the very core of each person's being. The subject or internal term of the relation is a set of basic human inclinations which are incarnated through a particular person's history and culture. The objective or external term is a network of goods which can fulfill these basic human inclinations. If, in accord with traditional natural law morality, one admits that inclinations to know and to choose unconditional good and unconditional truth are at the very core of the subjective set of man's basic inclinations, then the Divine is present to human beings as both source and final end,<sup>3</sup> and prudential reasoning is a process of human knowing and loving whose ultimate term is the Divine Itself.<sup>4</sup> How does this process function in everyday living?

The prudential process may be understood to develop in two interrelated phases. Prudential people form their own general moral philosophy of life in one phase. They attempt to express this philosophy of life in choices, in the second phase, thereby making themselves morally good.<sup>5</sup> The philosophical phase has a kind of priority over the concrete phase, since it is a norm that is concretized in a prudential choice. Prudence is personal in both phases, but it is usually more personal in the second, as a person actually commits him/herself to choice and action with all the affective involvement which that entails.

In the first phase of prudence a person responds to the Divine by making an honest effort to determine the general directions his/her life should take insofar as these are indicated by his knowledge of what he or she is as a "being in the world". This is true, because outside of religious contexts which are not the issue in this study, a person is considered to be fully moral, to be a person of good conscience, only if he or she has critically thought through the code of morality functioning in his/her environment.<sup>6</sup>

In developing a moral philosophy of life a person usually develops a network of moral guidelines. These indicate in general ways the courses of action that one particular person, living in a definite moment of history, should follow or refrain from following as he or she goes about

achieving his/her human destiny. Since the structure of man and the universe in which he or she lives in developing, and because a person's knowledge of those structures is open to modification and clarification, the content of the prudential person's moral philosophy of life is also open to modification and clarification.

Much of the second phase of prudence is an attempt to determine in the situation the course of action that best concretizes one's moral philosophy of life. The process of discovery accompanying that effort is dialectical. The person performing it considers both the general norms making up his/her moral philosophy and the concrete existential context in which the prudential action will be exercised. In many cases this dialectic may not be very overt, perhaps not even noticeable. Two reasons account for this: either the relation between a person's norms and the concrete context is so clear that the prudential course of action becomes immediately apparent upon observation; or the remembrance of a deliberation made previously, in a similar situation, makes the appropriate course of action in the immediate moment readily discernible.

The dialectical process of prudence becomes manifest, however, in those contexts where one is unclear about the choice he or she should make to foster best his/her moral philosophy of life. When the dialectical deliberation is effective it will at least eliminate some possible, but immoral, options from being chosen in the pertinent situation. In any case, the significant point here is that the dialectical reasoning of prudence will always permit the prudential person to make his/her choices in the least capricious way possible.<sup>7</sup> In so doing, the prudential person's choices will be rational: and thereby fitting, responses to the Divine call which is the very core of that person's being.

In addition to being the process which allows one to determine the practically wise course of action for the situation, the prudential dialectic may urge a person to make some changes in the set of guidelines that make up his/her moral philosophy of life. This is true because in the cognitive element of the prudential dialectic a person may gain a deeper insight into the nature of the world or he or she may become more knowledgeable about his/her human condition.

This indicates a kind of scientific reasoning to be at the core of the prudential process. In being prudent a person moves from his/her general guidelines, achieved through a quasi-inductive process, to a specific determination and expression of those norms in concrete action. But the very dialectical process that was used for making the concrete determination is, at the same time, a validation procedure for the norms.

The fact that one's general action-guides are subject to falsification implies that a person's prudence and personal moral status are measurable more by a person's integrity and effort to act ethically than by the kind of action he or she performs. In brief, the mystery of moral goodness may well be a mystery in which the "providence" of prudence is truly a participation in something much larger, namely in a providence which is Divine.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the fact that any instance of personal moral goodness is situated within a mystery, the structure of prudence shows that substantive ethical judgments would be useful to the prudential process. As noted earlier, a person exists prudentially because his/her choices result from an honest effort to choose values fitting for a human being in his/her moment of history. Consequently, the prudential process is by its very nature open to "expert" information on the rightness and wrongness of human action. Moreover, in the process of being prudent in today's world a person is called upon to make moral judgments on the behavior of other people. In our present culture, for example, a prudential person must decide whether he or she favors the pro-life side or the pro-choice side of the abortion issue. The person who makes this kind of decision from data which includes ethical expertise would seem to be in a better position to make a choice which actually

fosters human values than the individual having no access to ethical expertise. Prudence then can use ethics. Indeed prudence demands that ethical knowledge be sought and, when discovered, that it be promulgated effectively.

## **Ethics**

Similar to the prudential process, the method of ethics may be understood to proceed in two stages. The task in the first stage is to determine both an ideal model of man and the basic standards for making general practical judgments on the morality of human action. The task in the second phase is also two-fold. It is necessary in this phase to develop a realistic model of man that is directly relevant for people living in a given culture or, if appropriate, in a given sub-culture. Actually formulating the prescriptions directly relevant to people living in a given culture or sub-culture is also the work of the second phase of ethics.

Regarding the first phase of ethics, a viable ideal model of man can be determined by cross-referencing data, on the make-up of basic human inclinations and the values related to them that is available from a variety of sources which investigate or report on the general nature of the human condition. Included among those sources would be many excellent philosophies drawn from traditional natural law morality along with the biographies of those people in human history who have been acclaimed for their moral perfection (e.g., most Christian saints). These sources reveal certain basic relationships pertinent to man as man. Among those relationships are: a source and basis for man's being and man's need to relate to a higher power; man's need to self-realize by acquiring intrinsic goods such as knowledge of truth, beauty and friendship; man's need to possess goods such as food, shelter, clothing and health which are necessary for human life. Although the forms in which these relations are expressed may differ among cultures, and although people in some cultures may not recognize some of man's basic relations, cultural anthropology does not falsify the information about man's general needs and values that are provided by philosophy, history and biography. This is true because cultural differences can be explained by factors such as ignorance or man-made institutions, with their inbuilt limitations (e.g., capitalistic or socialistic economies), and these factors are not incompatible with the concept of the ideal moral man described above.

The schema of significant relations present in the ideal moral man provides a standard for measuring the rectitude of human action because they indicate in general ways the kinds of actions a person would either perform or refrain from performing if his/her actions accorded perfectly with human values. He or she would, for example, act in ways which were positive responses to the source of his/her being rather than to some idol. In accord with this, and the value pertinent to human dignity, he or she would always treat self and others as ends, and not as means. In accord with those two directives and the relationship involving physical and psychic welfare, he or she would always act in ways which showed a significant regard for the welfare goods of both self and others.

The model of the human condition in the second phase of ethics would describe the "nature" of man actually present in a given culture or subculture, with all their general characteristics and limitations. This second model may be developed through a process of cross-referencing, similar in form to the process used for developing the first model. In the second model, however, the relevant data on human relationships comes from the social and behavioral sciences, contemporary literature and, to some extent, from information provided by the media.

When the second model is developed, a dialectical process similar to the one used in prudence becomes operative. The function of the dialectic in ethics is to reduce the standards of the ideally ethically acting person to a formula that is practically realizable in the pertinent culture or subculture that provides the basis for the second model.

Limitations or constraints in the pertinent culture or subculture may make what is morally realizable in those groups fall short of the behavior of an ideally ethically acting person. If we grant, for example, that our economic institutions are interwoven in a highly complex network which fosters exploitation as well as service, then it seems that the ideal ethical standard directing people to treat themselves and others as ends, and never as means only, could not be fully realized in America today. Despite this limitation, however, it would still be reasonable, thereby ethically significant, to determine the least exploitative ways that Americans should use prescriptions in their business operations.

Ethical prescriptions, similar to the norms in an individual's personal practical wisdom, are also subject to falsification. The model used in forming a direct ethical prescription is subject to development and change as the people whom they portray develop, or as the knowledge of that group is made more precise in the mind of the ethicist.

## **Ethics and Prudence**

If the analysis in the preceding sections has merit, then the relationship between prudence and ethics has been sharpened. That may now be highlighted in summary form by describing how prudence and ethics are united, though clearly different.

Prudence is a highly personal process which terminates in concrete action. This process is ultimately a positive response which a person makes to the Divine source of his/her being. The response is expressed by the honest effort the prudential person makes to understand him/her self and to act concretely in a rational manner in accord with that understanding. A person's prudential character, i.e., his/her moral goodness, is ultimately set within the context of a mystery, as the Divine term in the relation forming that goodness is essentially incomprehensible in human categories of interpretation.

Ethics, on the other hand, is a process which terminates in knowledge. It attempts to make known in general ways the relations which should obtain between human value and human action. The ethical procedure is scientific. It uses empirical data in its deliberations and requires the ethicist to assume a disinterested and impersonal attitude. Ethical conclusions may be changed, as they are open to development and further clarifications.

Ethics and prudence are united by their reference to human value. The prudential person directs him/her self to foster human value and the very *raison d'être* of ethics is to make known in general the ways in which human value can be fostered. Since ethics serves prudence, and because prudence entails a reference to the Divine at its core, prudence and ethics are united ultimately by reference to the same Divine being.

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## Notes

1. Cf. Odon Lottin, *Principes de morale* (Louvain: Editions Mont Cesar, 1946) for an excellent presentation of traditional natural law morality that includes an analysis of both prudence and ethics.

2. Marcus Singer, for example, uses this connotation of the term in his *Generalization in Ethics* (New York: Knopf, 1963). Louis Katsoff makes a distinction between the prudential and any form of the moral in his *Making Moral Decisions* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955).

3. Cf. Gerard Smith, *Natural Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), pp. 102-103.

4. "Now the first principle in practical matters, which are the object of the practical reason, is the last end, and the end of human life is happiness or beatitude." Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 90, a. 3, cf. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Anton Pegis, ed. (New York: Random House, 1945), Vol. II, p. 744.

5. Cf. Josef Pieper, *Prudence* (New York: Pantheon, 1959), p. 25.

6. Cf. William Frankena, *Ethics*, second edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), pp. 7-8.

7. For a list of the integral parts of prudence used traditionally by Thomists to explain how prudence functions, cf. Michael Murray, *Problems in Conduct* (New York: Holt, 1963), pp. 11-16.

8. "Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to divine providence in a more excellent way, in so far as it itself partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and others." Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2, c.; cf. Pegis, op. cit., p. 750.

9. Charles Fay, "Human Evolution: A Challenge to Thomistic Ethics", *International Philosophy Quarterly*, 2 (1962), 50-80, makes a good case for the point that cultural factors qualify inclinations in a way that is morally significant.





## Chapter XIII

# Positive Law in Natural Law

*John T. Noonan, Jr.*

The present topic is the relation of positive law and natural law. I suppose that it is pretty well established that the notion of nature which is current in the sciences at any given time has a considerable impact on what is taken to be nature in philosophical and moral reasoning, and changes in the physical or biological model have their repercussions in the philosophical area.<sup>1</sup> I would say that, while it has been perhaps less emphasized, it is also pretty well established that the model of law that is current in a given society has an influence on the idea of moral law. This influence, of course, is a reciprocal matter. As the model of law has gone from that of a written code as the quintessence of law to a model of law as a creative process in which the participants interacting create the law,<sup>2</sup> there have been great repercussions on the image of law that is used in moral thought.<sup>3</sup> Both nature and law, the composites of natural law, do to some extent depend on the models drawn from these other fields.

I say all this by way of generalization, and would like to turn to look at some concrete historical instances of the relation of positive law to natural law. I do so believing that philosophers and moralists often operate with insufficient reference to the concrete, and particularly with insufficient reference to the historically concrete. In discussing questions of natural law, they are apt to stay at a level of generalization which keeps them from looking at how the notion was actually put to use by their predecessors.

## Usury

An appropriate subject to start with, because of its neutrality for us, is the interaction of law and nature in the reasoning against usury. This was a classic field of natural law thought. If it is neutral today, if we can look at it as kind of a specimen, it seems to me that we should take advantage of its colorlessness, and, as in an historical laboratory, study the kind of process that went on in the reasoning of scholastic philosophers about usury.

The first argument made against usury in the scholastic canonical tradition, was that usury was intrinsically contradictory because one charged for the use of something that was no longer one's own. The first form of the argument was at the level of a pun. A loan, *mutuum*, came from *meum* and *tuum--meum* became *tuum*, mine became yours, and if mine became yours, I should not charge for it any longer.<sup>4</sup> Now at that purely verbal level, I suppose anybody today, and certainly the more acute scholastics, were unsatisfied. It was simply a play on the word and not a very substantial argument. But the idea of an intrinsically contradictory act was appealing, and the broader and more resonant argument was developed that usury was wrong because money was sterile, and the act of lending was therefore a sterile act. To make a sterile act a fertile act was intrinsically contradictory. Money in this way was contrasted with animals which breed naturally. If God had wanted it, the implication was, money would somehow have been capable of breeding. Animals did breed, money did not. There was a divinely established difference between the sterile act, involving the sterile medium, money, and the fruitful act.<sup>5</sup>

On further investigation, this argument was unsatisfactory in two respects. It was unsatisfactory because it did not cover the case of grain, and loans of grain in an agricultural community were not rare, and were prohibited as usurious by the Bible. The argument did not

cover or distinguish the case of the renting of houses. Houses, which did not breed any more than money, could be transferred to someone else for use and a profit could be taken from the use. On the one hand, then, there was a type of commodity, a house, which could be rented, although barren; and, on the other hand, there was money which could not be given to another for use and charged for because it was barren. There was a contradiction between these two conclusions.

Principally due to the efforts and insights of Thomas Aquinas, the argument was refined and became this argument: What is wrong in usury is to charge for a good which is consumptible in its first use.<sup>6</sup> In that sense, food, wine, and money are similar: in order to use them you have to use them. To distinguish between the value and the use in the case of goods like food, wine and money, which are consumed in their use, is unnatural. It is an unnatural attempt to separate use from value, and to charge for the use apart from a value is intrinsically self-stultifying.

The argument devised by St. Thomas and repeated for the next six hundred years is formally correct. If you abstract from circumstances and abstract from the particular position of the lender, it seems to be flawless. To take money kept in a chest and try to distinguish the value from the use is impossible.

There were, however, several problems with this analysis. The first question that anyone would have asked is why you have to treat money as a medium of exchange to be consumed in use, as there are other uses of money. It was admitted that you could loan money to put on display--a rent of money *ad pompam*, to impress someone else with your wealth--and that kind of rent of money for show did not involve its use. The Thomistic argument did not cover this case where the use of money was not to spend it but to show it, and it was agreed that you could charge for this use of money.<sup>7</sup> That conclusion did not trouble the theorists very much because lending money for show was said to be a secondary use of money. It seemed easy to distinguish a primary use of money and a secondary use. Though no statistics were gathered, it was believable that the number of times people borrowed money to show it were rather few, while the times people borrowed money to use it were rather high. It seemed sensible then to call one use secondary and the other primary.

The real difficulty came when money was regarded more generally in some other way than as a medium of exchange. That arose first in the sale of money in foreign exchanges, where the money being purchased was money of another country. Foreign exchange sales involved transfers from one country to another, and in those conditions a sale required the transport of the money or the bill of exchange so that there was a delay of several weeks involved in exchange sales. In that delay credit was involved, and the price of foreign exchange included a charge for credit. For a long time the theologians were puzzled as to whether they should regard money being sold in the exchanges as being sold as a medium of exchange or as a commodity. After 300 years of debate the decision was taken to treat money on the foreign exchanges as a commodity on which profit could be made.<sup>8</sup> By this type of analysis, which distinguished money in foreign exchange transactions from a medium of exchange, an international market in short term loans was permitted despite the usury prohibition. This result raised the question, Why cannot money in its own country be treated as something besides a medium of exchange? Why cannot money always be sold for a profit? The only answer to this question was that the law had fixed the value of money; to charge above the face-value for money would be to go against what the law had determined.<sup>9</sup> I emphasize this answer because here, at the very crux of the argument against usury, an appeal is made to what the positive law has determined. It is the determination of the positive law that money has a value which cannot be altered in its own country; and that is the basis for the entire argument that money cannot be put out at usury.

Yet, despite the fact that the entire argument rested on the positive institution of man in creating money, there was a tremendous urge to attempt to see the usury prohibition as something that rested on the will of God, as something that was intrinsically against the constitution of the universe. Even the stones would cry out against the usurer, says William of Auxerre, because the usurer sells time which belongs to God.<sup>10</sup> Raising the argument to the level of eschatology, St. Bernardine of Sienna says that Jesus Christ alone knows the time; for the usurer to sell time is, therefore, to sell what belongs to Christ and to His Father.<sup>11</sup>

To be able to say that usury was against nature or was intrinsically self-contradictory, or was something against the very structure of the universe, apparently offered tremendous psychological satisfaction. Otherwise why was there such fondness for this kind of argument? The appeal to intrinsic nature meant security for the moralists; it provided an apparently exceptionless rule; it provided a neat, simple, clear way of dealing with a problem. Yet this whole argument, constructed as an argument from nature, rested on the institutions of positive law and the positive determinations made about money.

Eventually the whole structure began to shift. The change occurred in part as other uses of money were recognized, and in part as the focus was changed from the abstract act of lending to the personal circumstances of the lender. It was recognized that the lender often did not get his money back. For a long while it was said that to recognize this risk of non-payment and to permit a charge for it was to destroy the naturally gratuitous character of the loan, so that risk in lending could not be admitted as a ground for interest.<sup>12</sup> Eventually, in the seventeenth century, the risk in lending was permitted as the basis for a charge.<sup>13</sup> It was also ultimately recognized that the lender might have his money in a profitable business and that in such a case he was not taking money from some sterile chest, and he might therefore charge for the profit that he had foregone.<sup>14</sup> In this way, by shifting to the concrete circumstances of the lender and away from the abstract act of lending, the formal perfection of the Thomistic argument against profit on a loan no longer was decisive. (What was decisive were the concrete reasons for which interest could be sought by the lender in the particular circumstances in which he was.) The whole idea of interest as opposed to usury grew up and after some 500 years of argument, by the mid-seventeenth century, became established.

In another way, one can see the rhetorical, and, I would suggest, the legal thrust of the natural law argument against usury. In other contexts, money was recognized as fertile. To begin with, it was recognized as fertile in the case of restitution. If somebody was a thief and stole money, according to some moralists, he had to give it back with interest.<sup>15</sup> In this type of situation, the moralists treated the stolen money as fertile. Again, when money was put into a partnership, where the partner ran some of the risk of the capital, his money was permitted to fructify to him in proportion to the capital, not in proportion to his risk.<sup>16</sup> Where for social reasons it was important to recognize that money had a return--in restitution, because a thief would be better discouraged by adding interest, in partnerships, because it was desirable to encourage joint ventures--then the formal theory that money was sterile was abandoned. Thus there were two different theories of money within the same tradition. In the end, of course, after some 700 or 800 years of analysis, it was recognized that in a modern industrial society it was appropriate to identify money with real capital, rather than to treat it simply or even primarily as a medium of exchange, and the old usury analysis was abandoned.<sup>17</sup>

In this history you can see that there was a tremendous satisfaction of psychological needs in having an argument that pronounced a form of behavior intrinsically contradictory. You might add that the argument based on intrinsic nature was simply a rationalization of a prohibition of the

Church. After all, the Church did prohibit taking any profit on a loan, the Church did say that it was mortal sin to hope for anything from a loan. That was the teaching of the Councils and the Popes and the Bible.<sup>18</sup> The philosophers of natural law merely invented an argument to justify the prohibition. I think such a commentary on the argument too facile. There was rationalization going on, and it was a factor, but it does not account for the ultimate success, the ultimate value of the philosophical enterprise. What the philosophers did, and what the theologians did who were philosophers, was to say in dealing with usury: You are not dealing with something the Pope set up. The Pope, for example, is not free to dispense in order to raise money for a worthy cause.<sup>19</sup> It is not that kind of thing that it is up to him to decide whether or not he will permit. Nor is usury something condemned in the Old Testament, which you can discard as a Jewish taboo. Nor is it something that is just the arbitrary will of God, as the extreme voluntarists would have had it. It is none of these things. There is a real evil in society, and this evil is what is reached by the prohibition of the Church; the prohibition of the Church is striking at a practice which is destructive of human values.

The medieval philosophers did not use the language of persons and of values. But in looking at the philosophical enterprise here over several hundred years, one can see that their way of looking at usury in natural law terms did attempt to protect human values. Their way put the matter in the realm of the rational. This result was the achievement of natural law thinking, which if the usury rule had been treated as mere positive law would never been brought about. By insisting that there was a rational basis for the prohibition, the theologians made it possible to abandon the prohibition when it became plain that the rational basis no longer subsisted. Such rationality is an outstanding characteristic of the scholastic tradition of moral thought. It is not committed to a series of taboos or Old Testament prohibitions. It puts moral problems in a field where the reasonable reflection of human beings is the way to the establishment of what the rules should be.

## Sexual Ethics

Let me turn to the area of sexual ethics. At first sight sexual ethics would appear to be different from economic ethics in that money and property are outside of man or extrinsic, whereas sexual ethics deals with the potentialities and faculties of man himself; from this one might expect a difference in the kind of change that has occurred or is possible. After studying the history of a number of these questions, I have been convinced that the differences are only relative. Obviously, with economic matters there can be a greater degree of change, but in sexual matters so much depends on a changing biological nature and on a changing social structure that a great part of sexual morals must be affected by changes in environment.

Here, where people's emotions are more involved, where the dispassionate approach possible with usury is not so possible, it may help to at least bear in mind that the same kind of structure has formed the basic approach to sex as formed the approach to usury. In dealing with the purposes of marriage, one argument of St. Augustine was the legal argument that the marriage contract said that marriage was for procreation of children.<sup>20</sup> Precisely as the theologians invoked the Roman law of *mutuum* and on consumptibles in order to show the sinfulness of usury, St. Augustine invoked the Roman marriage contract to show that it was against the legal institution to thwart the procreative purpose. Again, just as the argument was developed that money was sterile, so the argument was made that the act of intercourse was naturally fertile.<sup>21</sup> The varieties of this argument are not significant. Sometimes it is said that the genital organs are directed to procreation; sometimes it is said that the seed is directed to procreation; and sometimes it is said that the act of

intercourse is naturally procreative. All of these statements are variants on the natural fertility of intercourse.

There was no attempt to establish this natural fertility statistically. It was somehow taken as a kind of immediate insight. As it seemed to be obvious from observation that money did not produce offspring, so the observable fact that sometimes the act of intercourse resulted in children was taken to mean that the act was naturally procreative.<sup>22</sup> Again, just as the argument against usury was constructed by focusing on the act of lending or the formal nature of money, so, abstracting from all other factors, the argument was constructed that it was inherently contradictory to frustrate the act of intercourse and to deprive it of its procreative power.

There were serious problems with this analysis when other areas of moral life involving sexuality were looked at. In particular, when one turned from the reasoning developed about the purposes of intercourse to the reasoning about the marriage of the sterile, it was hard to see why the sterile could marry.<sup>23</sup> If it was really true that the act of intercourse was naturally procreative, were not the sterile doing something unnatural in having intercourse? When a development occurred in the nineteenth century whereby it was taught that it was possible to select the times of intercourse and to choose the sterile times, did not such selection constitute a deliberate frustration of the procreative purpose?

As in the case of usury, where looking at other fields, exceptions, and uses, led to a distinction between primary and secondary, so here a distinction was made between the primary use of intercourse and the secondary uses. The question was posed: If there are primary and secondary uses, why is it wrong to suppress the primary in behalf of the secondary? In the case of usury and money, the question about transferring the primary purpose of money from exchange to something else was answered in terms of the law. What the law said was treated as the will of God. In the case of the purposes of intercourse, there was not an appeal to the civil law but to papal decisions. The teaching of the Pope became decisive in the argument that the primary purpose could not be changed.<sup>24</sup> In debate in the twentieth century, what was controlling was the immediate force of ecclesiastical authority. Again, as in the case of money, the usual distinctions were cut away--in this case by ecclesiastical authority in the Second Vatican Council abandoning the distinction of primary and secondary purposes.<sup>25</sup>

Again you can say that the scholastic theologians dreamed up an argument to justify a Church prohibition. After all, it can be pointed out, even less was known about sexual intercourse when the natural law argument was constructed than was known about the mechanism of money when the natural law on it was stated. There was no knowledge as to the female component in generation, the ovum; there was the scantiest knowledge about the male component. Yet the pretense was made that, without knowing anything about the elements, there was knowledge of the nature of the act--an absurd pretension as it appears in retrospect. Yet it was not absurd in its time where it reflected the best medical scientific evidence available.

The great function of the scholastic moral philosophers was to deal with the matter of marital intercourse seriously, to see that the procreation of children should not be treated as an act subject to arbitrary whim, to insist that embryonic and infant life was not disposable of by parents. To categorize the problems involved as belonging to natural law was to say that the prohibitions involved were not mere taboos, as the Old Testament prohibition against intercourse in menstruation turned out to be. It was to recognize that they were dealing here with some of the serious problems of mankind, matters that could not be decided by the arbitrary whim of an individual or the state or the Pope, but matters that had to be examined in the most rational way,

with the most reflection, with the greatest attention to the data. On the basis of this kind of contemplation one could draw up rules of moral action.

In each case, in the case of usury and in the case of the rules on intercourse, assistance was derived from the models offered by the positive law of the society. The philosophical enterprise did not stop with these models. The enterprise went on, it looked at the implications for man as a person. In that way it constructed and continues to create rules of action far better than those of any positive law.

## Notes

1. Albert Mitterer, *Die Zeugung der Organismen, insbesondere des Menschen nach dem Weltbild des hl Thomas von Aquin und dem der Gegenwart* (Vienna, 1947); Mitterer, *Dogma und Biologie der Heiligen Familie nach dem Weltbild des hl Thomas von Aquin und dem der Gegenwart* (Vienna: Herder, 1952).

2. John T. Noonan, Jr., "From Social Engineering to Creative Charity", *Knowledge and the Future of Man*, ed. Walter J. Ong (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), p. 180.

3. M.G. Plattel, "Personal Response and the Natural Law", *Natural Law Forum*, 7 (1963) 36-37.

4. Huguccio, *Summa*, 14.3 ante c. 1 (M.S. Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. lat. 10247).

5. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily*, *Patrologia graeca* (ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1857-1866) 54.671.

6. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II.78.1 (Leonine edition, Rome: Forzani, 1894).

7. Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, 13.4 and 15, ed. P. Bazzi and P.M. Pession (Trino, 1949).

8. Cajetan, *De cambiis*, c.2, *Scripta philosophica: Opuscula oeconomica-socialia*, edited by P. Zammit (Rome: Typographia missionaria dominicana, 1934).

9. Luis de Molina, *De justitia et jure*, 2.410.4.

10. William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea*, 3.21.1 (Paris, 1500).

11. Bernardine, *De contractibus*, 43.2.3, in *De evangelio aeterno. Opera omnia*, Vol. 2, ed. J. de la Haye (Venice, 1745).

12. *Ibid.*, 39.1.3.

13. See John T. Noonan Jr., *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 281-293.

14. Navarrus, *De usuris*, 5.6, *Opera omnia* (Venice, 1618) Vol. 1.

15. William of Auxerre, *Summa*, 3.21.

16. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II.78.2 ad 5; see *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, pp. 133-153.

17. E.g., William Ceasar, Cardinal de la Luzerne, *Dissertations sur le prêt-de-commerce* (1822), Vol. 3, part 1.

18. John T. Noonan, Jr., "Authority on Usury and Contraception", *Tidjschrift voor Theologie* (1966), republished in *Cross Currents*, 16 (1966).

19. Gregory IX, *Decretales*, 5.19.4.

20. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 15.7, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum*, 25.430.

21. Clement of Alexandria, *The Teacher*, 2.10, *Patrologia graeca*, ed., J.P.M. gnp, vol. 8, 506.

22. See John T. Noonan Jr., *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 295-296.

23. Charles Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae hodiernis acamediarum moribus accommodata* (Paris: Letouzey Ané, 1927-1931), "De bonis et actibus matrimonii" 2.2.

24. Pius XI, *Casti connubii*, *Acta apostolicae sedis*, 22.560 (1930).

25. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, sec. 50, *Acta apostolicae sedis*, 58.1070-1072 (1966); but cf. Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, *Acta apostolicae sedis* (1968).





**Appendix I**  
***The Splendor of Truth***  
*John Paul II*

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THE SPLENDOR OF TRUTH shines forth in the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26). Truth enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord. Hence the Psalmist prays: "Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord" (Ps 4:6).

## INTRODUCTION

1. Called to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, "the true light that enlightens everyone" (Jn 1:9), people become "light in the Lord" and "children of light" (Eph 5:8), and are made holy by "obedience to the truth" (1 Pet 1:22).

This obedience is not always easy. As a result of that mysterious original sin, committed at the prompting of Satan, the one who is "a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44), man is constantly tempted to turn his gaze away from the living and true God in order to direct it towards idols (cf. 1 Thes 1:9), exchanging "the truth about God for a lie" (Rom 1:25). Man's capacity to know the truth is also darkened, and his will to submit to it is weakened. Thus, giving himself over to relativism and scepticism (cf. Jn 18:38), he goes off in search of an illusory freedom apart from truth itself.

But no darkness of error or of sin can totally take away from man the light of God the Creator. In the depths of his heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it. This is eloquently proved by man's tireless search for knowledge in all fields. It is proved even more by his search *for the meaning of life*. The development of science and technology, this splendid testimony of the human capacity for understanding and for perseverance, does not free humanity from the obligation to ask the ultimate religious questions. Rather, it spurs us on to face the most painful and decisive of struggles, those of the heart and of moral conscience.

2. No one can escape from the fundamental questions: *What must I do? How do I distinguish good from evil?* The answer is only possible thanks to the splendor of the truth which shines forth

deep within the human spirit, as the Psalmist bears witness: "There are many who say: `O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord'" (Ps 4:6).

The light of God's face shines in all its beauty on the countenance of Jesus Christ, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), the "resection of God's glory" (Heb 1:3), "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). Consequently the decisive answer to every one of man's questions, his religious and moral questions in particular, is given by Jesus Christ, or rather is Jesus Christ himself, as the Second Vatican Council recalls: "In fact, *it is only in the mystery of the Word incarnate that light is shed on the mystery of man.* For Adam, the first man, was a figure of the future man, namely, of Christ the Lord. It is Christ, the last Adam, who fully discloses man to himself and unfolds his noble calling by revealing the mystery of the Father and the Father's love."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ, the "light of the nations," shines upon the face of his Church, which he sends forth to the whole world to proclaim the Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15).<sup>2</sup> Hence the Church, as the People of God among the nations,<sup>3</sup> while attentive to the new challenges of history and to mankind's efforts to discover the meaning of life, offers to everyone the answer which comes from the truth about Jesus Christ and his Gospel. The Church remains deeply conscious of her "duty in every age of examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, so that she can offer in a manner appropriate to each generation replies to the continual human questioning on the meaning of this life and the life to come and on how they are related."<sup>4</sup>

3. The Church's Pastors, in communion with the Successor of Peter, are close to the faithful in this effort; they guide and accompany them by their authoritative teaching, finding ever new ways of speaking with love and mercy not only to believers but to all people of good will. The Second Vatican Council remains an extraordinary witness of this attitude on the part of the Church which, as an "expert in humanity,"<sup>5</sup> places herself at the service of every individual and of the whole world.<sup>6</sup> The Church knows that the issue of morality is one which deeply touches every person; it involves all people, even those who do not know Christ and his Gospel or God himself. She knows that it is precisely *on the path of the moral life that the way of salvation is open to all.* The Second Vatican Council clearly recalled this when it stated that "those who without any fault do not know anything about Christ or his Church, yet who search for God with a sincere heart and under the influence of grace, try to put into effect the will of God as known to them through the dictate of conscience . . . can obtain eternal salvation." The Council added: "Nor does divine Providence deny the helps that are necessary for salvation to those who, through no fault of their own have not yet attained to the express recognition of God, yet who strive, not without divine grace, to lead an upright life. For whatever goodness and truth is found in them is considered by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel and bestowed by him who enlightens everyone that they may in the end have life."<sup>7</sup>

## THE PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT ENCYCLICAL

4. At all times, but particularly in the last two centuries, the Popes, whether individually or together with the College of Bishops, have developed and proposed a moral teaching regarding the *many different spheres of human life.* In Christ's name and with his authority they have exhorted, passed judgment and explained. In their efforts on behalf of humanity, in fidelity to their mission, they have confirmed, supported and consoled. With the guarantee of assistance from the Spirit of truth they have contributed to a better understanding of moral demands in the areas of

human sexuality, the family, and social, economic and political life. In the tradition of the Church and in the history of humanity, their teaching represents a constant deepening of knowledge with regard to morality.<sup>8</sup>

Today, however, it seems *necessary to reflect on the whole of the Church's moral teaching*, with the precise goal of recalling certain fundamental truths of Catholic doctrine which, in the present circumstances, risk being distorted or denied. In fact, a new situation has come about *within the Christian community itself*, which has experienced the spread of numerous doubts and objections of a human and psychological, social and cultural, religious and even properly theological nature, with regard to the Church's moral teachings. It is no longer a matter of limited and occasional dissent, but of an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine, on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions. At the root of these presuppositions is the more or less obvious influence of currents of thought which end by detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth. Thus the traditional doctrine regarding the natural law, and the universality and the permanent validity of its precepts, is rejected; certain of the Church's moral teachings are found simply unacceptable; and the Magisterium itself is considered capable of intervening in matters of morality only in order to "exhort consciences" and to "propose values," in the light of which each individual will independently make his or her decisions and life choices.

In particular, note should be taken of the *lack of harmony between the traditional response of the Church and certain theological positions*, encountered even in seminaries and in faculties of theology, *with regard to questions of the greatest importance* for the Church and for the life of faith of Christians, as well as for the life of society itself. In particular, the question is asked: do the commandments of God, which are written on the human heart and are part of the Covenant, really have the capacity to clarify the daily decisions of individuals and entire societies? Is it possible to obey God and thus love God and neighbor, without respecting these commandments in all circumstances? Also, an opinion is frequently heard which questions the intrinsic and unbreakable bond between faith and morality, as if membership in the Church and her internal unity were to be decided on the basis of faith alone, while in the sphere of morality a pluralism of opinions and of kinds of behavior could be tolerated, these being left to the judgment of the individual subjective conscience or to the diversity of social and cultural contexts.

5. Given these circumstances, which still exist, I came to the decision--as I announced in my Apostolic Letter *Spiritus Domini*, issued on August 1, 1987 on the second centenary of the death of Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori--to write an encyclical with the aim of treating "more fully and more deeply the issues regarding the very foundations of moral theology,"<sup>9</sup> foundations which are being undermined by certain present-day tendencies.

I address myself to you, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopates, who share with me the responsibility of safeguarding "sound teaching" (2 Tim 4:3), with the intention of *clearly setting forth certain aspects of doctrine which are of crucial importance in facing what is certainly a genuine crisis*, since the difficulties which it engenders have most serious implications for the moral life of the faithful and for communion in the Church, as well as for a just and fraternal social life.

If this encyclical, so long awaited, is being published only now, one of the reasons is that it seemed fitting for it to be preceded by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which contains a complete and systematic exposition of Christian moral teaching. The Catechism presents the moral life of believers in its fundamental elements and in its many aspects as the life of the "children of

God": "Recognizing in the faith their new dignity, Christians are called to lead henceforth a life 'worthy of the Gospel of Christ' (Phil 1:27). Through the sacraments and prayer they receive the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit which make them capable of such a life."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, while referring to the Catechism "as a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine,"<sup>11</sup> the encyclical will limit itself to dealing with *certain fundamental questions regarding the Church's moral teaching*, taking the form of a necessary discernment about issues being debated by ethicists and moral theologians. The specific purpose of the present encyclical is this: to set forth, with regard to the problems being discussed, the principles of a moral teaching based upon Sacred Scripture and the living Apostolic Tradition,<sup>12</sup> and at the same time to shed light on the presuppositions and consequences of the dissent which that teaching has met.

## CHAPTER I. CHRIST AND THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION ABOUT MORALITY

*"Teacher what Good (must) I do . . . ?" (Mt 19:16)*

*"Someone came to him . . . ." (Mt 19:16)*

6. *The dialogue of Jesus with the rich young man*, related in the nineteenth chapter of Saint Matthew's Gospel, can serve as a useful guide *for listening once more* in a lively and direct way to his moral teaching: "Then someone came to him and said, 'Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to him, 'Which ones?' And Jesus said, 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The young man said to him, 'I have kept all these; what do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me'" (Mt 19:16-21).<sup>13</sup>

7. "Then someone came to him. . . ." In the young man, whom Matthew's Gospel does not name, we can recognize every person who, consciously or not, *approaches Christ the redeemer of man and questions him about morality*. For the young man, the *question is* not so much about rules to be followed, but *about the full meaning of life*. This is in fact the aspiration at the heart of every human decision and action, the quiet searching and interior prompting which sets freedom in motion. This question is ultimately an appeal to the absolute Good which attracts us and beckons us; it is the echo of a call from God who is the origin and goal of man's life. Precisely in this perspective the Second Vatican Council called for a renewal of moral theology, so that its teaching would display the lofty vocation which the faithful have received in Christ,<sup>14</sup> the only response fully capable of satisfying the desire of the human heart.

*In order to make this "encounter" with Christ possible, God willed his Church*. Indeed, the Church "wishes to serve this single end: that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life."<sup>15</sup>

*"Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life? " (Mt 19:16)*

8. The question which the rich young man puts to Jesus of Nazareth is one which rises from the depths of his heart. It is *an essential and unavoidable question for the life of every man*, for it is about the moral good which must be done, and about eternal life. The young man senses that

there is a connection between moral good and the fulfillment of his own destiny. He is a devout Israelite, raised as it were in the shadow of the Law of the Lord. If he asks Jesus this question, we can presume that it is not because he is ignorant of the answer contained in the Law. It is more likely that the attractiveness of the person of Jesus had prompted within him new questions about moral good. He feels the need to draw near to the One who had begun his preaching with this new and decisive proclamation: "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mk 1:15).

*People today need to turn to Christ once again in order to receive from him the answer to their questions about what is good and what is evil.* Christ is the Teacher, the Risen One who has life in himself and who is always present in his Church and in the world. It is he who opens up to the faithful the book of the Scriptures and, by fully revealing the Father's will, teaches the truth about moral action. At the source and summit of the economy of salvation, as the Alpha and the Omega of human history (cf. Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), Christ sheds light on man's condition and his integral vocation. Consequently, "the man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly--and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being--must, with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter him with all his own self; he must 'appropriate' and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself. If this profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of deeper wonder at himself."<sup>16</sup>

If we therefore wish to go to the heart of the Gospel's moral teaching and grasp its profound and unchanging content, we must carefully inquire into the meaning of the question asked by the rich young man in the Gospel and, even more, the meaning of Jesus' reply, allowing ourselves to be guided by him. Jesus, as a patient and sensitive teacher, answers the young man by taking him, as it were, by the hand, and leading him step by step to the full truth.

*"There is only one who is good" (Mt 19:17)*

9. Jesus says: "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17). In the versions of the Evangelists Mark and Luke the question is phrased in this way: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mk 10:18; cf. Lk 18:19).

Before answering the question, Jesus wishes the young man to have a clear idea of why he asked his question. The "Good Teacher" points out to him--and to all of us--that the answer to the question, "What good must I do to have eternal life?" can only be found by turning one's mind and heart to the "One" who is good: "No one is good but God alone" (Mk 10:18; cf. Lk 18:19). *Only God can answer the question about what is good, because he is the Good itself.*

*To ask about the good, in fact, ultimately means to turn towards God, the fullness of goodness.* Jesus shows that the young man's question is really a *religious question*, and that the goodness that attracts and at the same time obliges man has its source in God, and indeed is God himself. God alone is worthy of being loved "with all one's heart, and with all one's soul, and with all one's mind" (Mt 22:37). He is the source of man's happiness. Jesus brings the question about morally good action back to its religious foundations, to the acknowledgment of God, who alone is goodness, fullness of life, the final end of human activity, and perfect happiness.

10. The Church, instructed by the Teacher's words, believes that man, made in the image of the Creator, redeemed by the Blood of Christ and made holy by the presence of the Holy Spirit,

has as the *ultimate purpose* of his life to live "for the praise of God's glory" (cf. Eph 1:12), striving to make each of his actions reflect the splendor of that glory. "Know, then, O beautiful soul, that you are *the image of God*," writes Saint Ambrose. "Know that you are *the glory of God* (1 Cor 11:7). Hear how you are his glory. The Prophet says: Your *knowledge has become too wonderful for me*(cf. Ps 138:6, Vulg.). That is to say, in my work your majesty has become more wonderful; in the counsels of men your wisdom is exalted. When I consider myself, such as I am known to you in my secret thoughts and deepest emotions, the mysteries of your knowledge are disclosed to me. Know then, O man, your greatness, and be vigilant."<sup>17</sup>

*What man is and what he must do becomes clear as soon as God reveals himself:* The Decalogue is based on these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex 20:2-3). In the "ten words" of the Covenant with Israel, and in the whole Law, God makes himself known and acknowledged as the One who "alone is good"; the One who, despite man's sin, remains the "model" for moral action in accordance with his command, "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2); as the One who, faithful to his love for man, gives him his Law (cf. Ex 19:9-24 and 20:18-21) in order to restore man's original and peaceful harmony with the Creator and with all creation, and, what is more, to draw him into his divine love: "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Lev 26:12).

*The moral life presents itself as the response* due to the many gratuitous initiatives taken by God out of love for man. It is a response of love, according to the statement made in Deuteronomy about the fundamental commandment: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children" (Dt 6:4-7). Thus the moral life, caught up in the gratuitousness of God's love, is called to reflect his glory: "For the one who loves God it is enough to be pleasing to the One whom he loves: for no greater reward should be sought than that love itself; charity in fact is of God in such a way that God himself is charity."<sup>18</sup>

11. The statement that "There is only one who is good" thus brings us back to the "first tablet" of the commandments, which calls us to acknowledge God as the one Lord of all and to worship him alone for his infinite holiness (cf. Ex 20:2-11). *The good is belonging to God, obeying him*, walking humbly with him in doing justice and in loving kindness (cf. Mic 6:8). *Acknowledging the Lord as God is the very core, the heart of the Law*, from which the particular precepts flow and towards which they are ordered. In the morality of the commandments the fact that the people of Israel belong to the Lord is made evident, because God alone is the One who is good. Such is the witness of Sacred Scripture, imbued in every one of its pages with a lively perception of God's absolute holiness: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Is 6:3).

But if God alone is the Good, no human effort, not even the most rigorous observance of the commandments, succeeds in "fulfilling" the Law, that is, acknowledging the Lord as God and rendering him the worship due to him alone (cf. Mt 4:10). This "fulfillment" can come only from a gift of God: the offer of a share in the divine Goodness revealed and communicated in Jesus, the one whom the rich young man addresses with the words "Good Teacher" (Mt 10:17; Lk 18:18). What the young man now perhaps only dimly perceives will, in the end, be fully revealed by Jesus himself in the invitation: "Come, follow me" (Mt 19:21).

*"If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments "(Mt 19:17)*

12. Only God can answer the question about the good, because he is the Good. But God has already given an answer to this question: he did so *by creating man and ordering him* with wisdom and love to his final end, through the law which is inscribed in his heart (cf. Rom 2:15), the "natural law." The latter "is nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God, whereby we understand what must be done and what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation."<sup>19</sup> He also did so *in the History of Israel*, particularly in the "ten words," the *commandments of Sinai*, whereby he brought into existence the people of the Covenant (cf. Ex 24) and called them to be his "own possession among all peoples," "a holy nation" (Ex 19:5-6), which would radiate his holiness to all peoples (cf. Wis 18:4; Ez 20:41). The gift of the Decalogue was a promise and sign of the *New Covenant*, in which the law would be written in a new and definitive way upon the human heart (cf. Jer 31:31-34), replacing the law of sin which had disfigured that heart (cf. Jer 17:1). In those days, "a new heart" would be given, for in it would dwell "a new spirit," the Spirit of God (cf. Ez 36:24-28).<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, after making the important clarification: "There is only one who is good," Jesus tells the young man: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17). In this way, a close connection is made *between eternal life and obedience to God's commandments*: God's commandments show man the path of life and they lead to it. From the very lips of Jesus, the new Moses, man is once again given the commandments of the Decalogue. Jesus himself definitively confirms them and proposes them to us as the way and condition of salvation. The commandments are linked to a promise. In the Old Covenant the object of the promise was the possession of a land where the people would be able to live in freedom and in accordance with righteousness (cf. Dt 6:20-25). In the New Covenant the object of the promise is the "Kingdom of Heaven," as Jesus declares at the beginning of the "Sermon on the Mount"--a sermon which contains the fullest and most complete formulation of the New Law (cf. Mt 5-7), clearly linked to the Decalogue entrusted by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. This same reality of the Kingdom is referred to in the expression "eternal life," which is a participation in the very life of God. It is attained in its perfection only after death, but in faith it is even now a light of truth, a source of meaning for life, an inchoate share in the full following of Christ. Indeed, Jesus says to his disciples after speaking to the rich young man: "Every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life" (Mt 19:29).

13. Jesus' answer is not enough for the young man, who continues by asking the Teacher about the commandments which must be kept: "He said to him, `Which ones?'" (Mt 19:18). He asks what he must do in life in order to show that he acknowledges God's holiness. After directing the young man's gaze toward God, Jesus reminds him of the commandments of the Decalogue regarding one's neighbor: "Jesus said: `You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mt 19:18-19).

From the context of the conversation, and especially from a comparison of Matthew's text with the parallel passages in Mark and Luke, it is clear that Jesus does not intend to list each and every one of the commandments required in order to "enter into life," but rather wishes to draw the young man's attention to the "*centrality*" of the Decalogue with regard to every other precept, inasmuch as it is the interpretation of what the words "I am the Lord your God" mean for man. Nevertheless we cannot fail to notice which commandments of the Law the Lord recalls to the young man. They are some of the commandments belonging to the so-called "second tablet" of the

Decalogue, the summary (cf. Rom 13:8-10) and foundation of which is *the commandment of love of neighbor*: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 19:19; cf. Mk 12:31). In this commandment we find a precise expression of *the singular dignity of the human person*, "the only creature that God has wanted for its own sake." The different commandments of the Decalogue are really only so many reflections of the one commandment about the good of the person, at the level of the many different goods which characterize his identity as a spiritual and bodily being in relationship with God, with his neighbor and with the material world. As we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "the Ten Commandments are part of God's Revelation. At the same time, they teach us man's true humanity. They shed light on the essential duties, and so indirectly on the fundamental rights, inherent in the nature of the human person."<sup>22</sup>

The commandments of which Jesus reminds the young man are meant to safeguard *the good* of the person, the image of God, by protecting his *goods*. "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness" are moral rules formulated in terms of prohibitions. These negative precepts express with particular force the ever urgent need to protect human life, the communion of persons in marriage, private property, truthfulness and people's good name.

The commandments thus represent the basic condition for love of neighbor; at the same time they are the proof of that love. They are the *first necessary step on the journey towards freedom*, its starting-point. "The beginning of freedom," Saint Augustine writes, "is to be free from crimes . . . such as murder, adultery, fornication, theft, fraud, sacrilege and so forth. Once one is without these crimes (and every Christian should be without them), one begins to lift up one's head toward freedom. But this is only the beginning of freedom, not perfect freedom. . . ."<sup>23</sup>

14. This certainly does not mean that Christ wishes to put the love of neighbor higher than, or even to set it apart from, the love of God. This is evident from his conversation with the teacher of the Law, who asked him a question very much like the one asked by the young man. Jesus refers him to *the two commandments of love of God and love of neighbor* (cf. Lk 10:25-27), and reminds him that only by observing them will he have eternal life: "Do this and you will live" (Lk 10:28). Nonetheless it is significant that it is precisely the second of these commandments which arouses the curiosity of the teacher of the Law, who asks him: "And who is my neighbor?" (Lk 10:29). The Teacher replies with the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is critical for fully understanding the commandment of love of neighbor (cf. Lk 10:30-37).

These two commandments, on which "depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:40), are profoundly connected and mutually related. *Their inseparable unity* is attested to by Christ in his words and by his very life: his mission culminates in the Cross of our Redemption (cf. Jn 3:14-15), the sign of his indivisible love for the Father and for humanity (cf. Jn 13:1).

Both the Old and the New Testaments explicitly affirm that *without love of neighbor*, made concrete in keeping the commandments, genuine love for God is not possible. Saint John makes the point with extraordinary forcefulness: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn 4:20). The Evangelist echoes the moral preaching of Christ, expressed in a wonderful and unambiguous way in the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:30-37) and in his words about the final judgment (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

15. In the "Sermon on the Mount," the magna charta of Gospel morality,<sup>24</sup> Jesus says: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have come not to abolish them but



to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17). Christ is the key to the Scriptures: "You search the Scriptures . . . ; and it is they that bear witness to me" (Jn 5:39). Christ is the center of the economy of salvation, the recapitulation of the Old and New Testaments, of the promises of the Law and of their fulfillment in the Gospel; he is the living and eternal link between the Old and the New Covenants. Commenting on Paul's statement that "Christ is the end of the law" (Rom 10:4), Saint Ambrose writes: "'end,' not in the sense of a deficiency, but in the sense of the fullness of the Law: a fullness which is achieved in Christ (*plenitudo legis in Christo est*), since he came not to abolish the Law, but to bring it to fulfillment. In the same way that there is an Old Testament, but all truth is in the New Testament, so it is for the Law: what was given through Moses is a figure of the true law. Therefore, the Mosaic Law is an image of the truth."<sup>25</sup>

*Jesus brings God's commandments to fulfillment*, particularly the commandment of love of neighbor, *by interiorizing their demands and by bringing out their fullest meaning*. Love of neighbor springs *from a loving heart* which, precisely because it loves, is ready to live out *the loftiest challenges*. Jesus shows that the commandments must not be understood as a minimum limit not to be gone beyond, but rather as a path involving a moral and spiritual journey towards perfection, at the heart of which is love (cf. Col 3:14). Thus the commandment "You shall not murder" becomes a call to an attentive love which protects and promotes the life of one's neighbor. The precept prohibiting adultery becomes an invitation to a pure way of looking at others, capable of respecting the spousal meaning of the body: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment. . . . You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:21-22, 27-28). *Jesus himself is the living "fulfillment" or the Law* inasmuch as he fulfills its authentic meaning by the total gift of himself: *he himself becomes a living and personal Law*, who invites people to follow him; through the Spirit, he gives the grace to share his own life and love and provides the love and provides the strength to bear witness to that love in personal choices and actions (cf. Jn 13:34-35).

*"If you wish to be perfect" (Mt 19:21)*

16. The answer he receives about the commandments does not satisfy the young man, who asks Jesus a further question. "I have kept all these; what do I still lack?" (Mt 19:20). It is not easy to say with a clear conscience "I have kept all these," if one has any understanding of the real meaning of the demands contained in God's Law. And yet, even though he is able to make this reply, even though he has followed the moral ideal seriously and generously from childhood, the rich young man knows that he is still far from the goal: before the person of Jesus he realizes that he is still lacking something. It is his awareness of this insufficiency that Jesus addresses in his final answer. Conscious of *the young man's yearning for something greater, which would transcend a legalistic interpretation of the commandments*, the Good Teacher invites him to enter upon the path of perfection: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Mt 19:21).

Like the earlier part of Jesus' answer, this part too must be read and interpreted in the context of the whole moral message of the Gospel, and in particular in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-12), the first of which is precisely the Beatitude of the poor, the "poor in spirit" as Saint Matthew makes clear (Mt 5:3), the humble. In this sense it can be said that the Beatitudes are also relevant to the answer given by Jesus to the young man's question: "What

good must I do to have eternal life?" Indeed, each of the Beatitudes promises, from a particular viewpoint, that very "good" which opens man up to eternal life, and indeed is eternal life.

*The Beatitudes* are not specifically concerned with certain particular rules of behavior. Rather, they speak of basic attitudes and dispositions in life and therefore they *do not coincide exactly with the commandments*. On the other hand, *there is no separation or opposition* between the Beatitudes and the commandments: both refer to the good, to eternal life. The Sermon on the Mount begins with the proclamation of the Beatitudes, but also refers to the commandments (cf. Mt 5:20-48). At the same time, the Sermon on the Mount demonstrates the openness of the commandments and their orientation toward the horizon of the perfection proper to the Beatitudes. These latter are above all *promises*, from which there also indirectly flow *normative indications* for the moral life. In their originality and profundity they are a sort of *self-portrait of Christ*, and for this very reason are *invitations to discipleship and communion of life with Christ*.<sup>26</sup>

17. We do not know how clearly the young man in the Gospel understood the profound and challenging import of Jesus' first reply: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." But it is certain that the young man's commitment to respect all the moral demands of the commandments represents the absolutely essential ground in which the desire for perfection can take root and mature, the desire, that is, for the meaning of the commandments to be completely fulfilled in following Christ. Jesus' conversation with the young man helps us to grasp *the conditions for the moral growth of man, who has been called to perfection: the young man, having observed all the commandments, shows that he is incapable of taking the next step by himself alone. To do so requires mature human freedom ("If you wish to be perfect") and God's gift of grace ("Come, follow me")*.

*Perfection demands that maturity in self-giving to which human freedom is called.* Jesus points out to the young man that the commandments are the first and indispensable condition for having eternal life; on the other hand, for the young man to give up all he possesses and to follow the Lord is presented as an invitation: "If you wish . . ." These words of Jesus reveal the particular dynamic of freedom's growth towards maturity, and at the same time *they bear witness to the fundamental relationship between freedom and divine law*. Human freedom and God's law are not in opposition; on the contrary, they appeal one to the other. The follower of Christ knows that his vocation is to freedom. "You were called to freedom, brethren" (Gal 5:13), proclaims the Apostle Paul with joy and pride. But he immediately adds: "only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (*ibid.*). The firmness with which the Apostle opposes those who believe that they are justified by the Law has nothing to do with man's "liberation" from precepts. On the contrary, the latter are at the service of the practice of love: "For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Rom 13:8-9). Saint Augustine, after speaking of the observance of the commandments as being a kind of incipient, imperfect freedom, goes on to say: "Why, someone will ask, is it not yet perfect? Because

'I see in my members another law at war with the law of my reason. . . .' In part freedom, in part slavery: not yet complete freedom, not yet pure, not yet whole, because we are not yet in eternity. In part we retain our weakness and in part we have attained freedom. All our sins were destroyed in Baptism, but does it follow that no weakness remained after iniquity was destroyed? Had none remained, we would live without sin in this life. But who would dare to say this except

someone who is proud, someone unworthy of the mercy of our deliverer . . . ? Therefore, since some weakness has remained in us, I dare to say that to the extent to which we serve God we are free, while to the extent that we follow the law of sin, we are still slaves.<sup>27</sup>

18. Those who live "by the flesh" experience God's law as a burden, and indeed as a denial or at least a restriction of their own freedom. On the other hand, those who are impelled by love and "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16), and who desire to serve others, find in God's Law the fundamental and necessary way in which to practice love as something freely chosen and freely lived out. Indeed, they feel an interior urge--a genuine "necessity" and no longer a form of coercion--not to stop at the minimum demands of the Law, but to live them in their "fullness." This is a still uncertain and fragile journey as long as we are on earth, but it is one made possible by grace, which enables us to possess the full freedom of the children of God (cf. Rom 8:21) and thus to live our moral life in a way worthy of our sublime vocation as "sons in the Son."

This vocation to perfect love is not restricted to a small group of individuals. *The invitation*, "go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor," and the promise "you will have treasure in heaven," *are meant for everyone*, because they bring out the full meaning of the commandment of love for neighbor, just as the invitation which follows, "Come, follow me," is the new, specific form of the commandment of love of God. Both the commandments and Jesus' invitation to the rich young man stand at the service of a single and indivisible charity, which spontaneously tends towards that perfection whose measure is God alone: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus makes even clearer the meaning of this perfection: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36).

*"Come, follow me" (Mt 19:21)*

19. The way and at the same time the content of this perfection consists in the following of Jesus, *sequela Christi*, once one has given up one's own wealth and very self. This is precisely the conclusion of Jesus' conversation with the young man: "Come, follow me" (Mt 19:21). It is an invitation the marvelous grandeur of which will be fully perceived by the disciples after Christ's Resurrection, when the Holy Spirit leads them to all truth (cf. Jn 16:13).

It is Jesus himself who takes the initiative and calls people to follow him. His call is addressed first to those to whom he entrusts a particular mission, beginning with the Twelve; but it is also clear that every believer is called to be a follower of Christ (cf. Acts 6:1). *Following Christ is thus the essential and primordial foundation of Christian morality*; just as the people of Israel followed God who led them through the desert towards the Promised Land (cf. Ex 13:21), so every disciple must follow Jesus, towards whom he is drawn by the Father himself (cf. Jn 6:44).

This is not a matter only of disposing oneself to hear a teaching and obediently accepting a commandment. More radically, it involves *holding fast to the very person of Jesus*, partaking of his life and his destiny, sharing in his free and loving obedience to the will of the Father. By responding in faith and following the one who is Incarnate Wisdom, the disciple of Jesus truly becomes *a disciple of God* (cf. Jn 6:45). Jesus is indeed the light of the world, the light of life (cf. Jn 8:12). He is the shepherd who leads his sheep and feeds them (cf. Jn 10:11-16); he is the way, and the truth, and the life (cf. Jn 14:6). It is Jesus who leads to the Father, so much so that to see him, the Son, is to see the Father (cf. Jn 14:6-10). And thus to imitate the Son, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15), means to imitate the Father.

20. *Jesus asks us to follow him and to imitate him along the path of love, a love which gives itself completely to the brethren out of love for God:* "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). The word "as" requires imitation of Jesus and of his love, of which the washing of feet is a sign: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:14-15). Jesus' way of acting and his words, his deeds and his precepts constitute the moral rule of Christian life. Indeed, his actions, and in particular his Passion and Death on the Cross, are the living revelation of his love for the Father and for others. This is exactly the love that Jesus wishes to be imitated by all who follow him. It is *the "new" commandment:* "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35).

The word "as" also indicates the *degree* of Jesus' love, and of the love with which his disciples are called to love one another. After saying: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12), Jesus continues with words which indicate the sacrificial gift of his life on the Cross, as the witness to a love "to the end" (Jn 13:1): "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).

As he calls the young man to follow him along the way of perfection, Jesus asks him to be perfect in the command of love, in "his" commandment: to become part of the unfolding of his complete giving, to imitate and rekindle the very love of the "Good" Teacher, the one who loved "to the end." This is what Jesus asks of everyone who wishes to follow him: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt 16:24).

21. *Following Christ is not an outward imitation, since it touches man at the very depths of his being. Being a follower of Christ means becoming conformed to him* who became a servant even to giving himself on the Cross (cf. Phil 2:5-8). Christ dwells by faith in the heart of the believer (cf. Eph 3:17), and thus the disciple is conformed to the Lord. This is the *effect of grace*, of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

Having become one with Christ, the Christian *becomes a member of his Body, which is the Church* (cf. 1 Cor 12:13, 27). By the work of the Spirit, Baptism radically configures the faithful to Christ in the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection; it "clothes him" in Christ (cf. Gal 3:27): "Let us rejoice and give thanks," exclaims Saint Augustine speaking to the baptized, "for we have become not only Christians, but Christ ( . . . ). Marvel and rejoice: we have become Christ!"<sup>28</sup> Having died to sin, those who are baptized receive new life (cf. Rom 6:3-11): alive for God in Christ Jesus, they are called to walk by the Spirit and to manifest the Spirit's fruits in their lives (cf. Gal 5:16-25). Sharing in the *Eucharist*, the sacrament of the New Covenant (cf. 1 Cor 11:23-29), is the culmination of our assimilation to Christ, the source of "eternal life" (cf. Jn 6:51-58), the source and power of that complete gift of self, which Jesus--according to the testimony handed on by Paul--commands us to commemorate in liturgy and in life: "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

*"With God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26)*

22. The conclusion of Jesus' conversation with the rich young man is very poignant: "When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful, for he had many possessions" (Mt 19:22). Not only the rich man but the disciples themselves are taken aback by Jesus' call to discipleship, the demands of which transcend human aspirations and abilities: "When the disciples heard this, they

were greatly astounded and said, `Then who can be saved?'" (Mt 19:25). *But the Master refers them to God's power:* "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26).

In the same chapter of Matthew's Gospel (19:3-10), Jesus, interpreting the Mosaic Law on marriage, rejects the right to divorce, appealing to a "beginning" more fundamental and more authoritative than the Law of Moses: God's original plan for mankind, a plan which man after sin has no longer been able to live up to: "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19:8). Jesus' appeal to the "beginning" dismays the disciples, who remark: "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry" (Mt 19:10). And Jesus, referring specifically to the charism of celibacy "for the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 19:12), but stating a general rule, indicates the new and surprising possibility opened up to man by God's grace. "He said to them: `Not everyone can accept this saying, but only those to whom it is given'" (Mt 19:11).

To imitate and live out the love of Christ is not possible for man by his own strength alone. He becomes *capable of this love only by virtue of a gift received*. As the Lord Jesus receives the love of his Father, so he in turn freely communicates that love to his disciples: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love" (Jn 15:9). *Christ's gift is his Spirit*, whose first "fruit" (cf. Gal 5:22) is charity: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us"(Rom 5:5). Saint Augustine asks: "Does love bring about the keeping of the commandments, or does the keeping of the commandments bring about love?" And he answers: "But who can doubt that love comes first? For the one who does not love has no reason for keeping the commandments."<sup>29</sup>

23. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). With these words the Apostle Paul invites us to consider in the perspective of the history of salvation, which reaches its fulfillment in Christ, *the relationship between the (Old) Law and grace* (the New Law). He recognizes the pedagogical function of the Law, which, by enabling sinful man to take stock of his own powerlessness and by stripping him of the presumption of his self-sufficiency, leads him to ask for and to receive "life in the Spirit." Only in this new life is it possible to carry out God's commandments. Indeed, it is through faith in Christ that we have been made righteous (cf. Rom 3:28): the "righteousness" which the Law demands, but is unable to give, is found by every believer to be revealed and granted by the Lord Jesus. Once again it is Saint Augustine who admirably sums up this Pauline dialectic of law and grace: "The law was given that grace might be sought; and grace was given, that the law might be fulfilled."<sup>30</sup>

Love and life according to the Gospel cannot be thought of first and foremost as a kind of precept, because what they demand is beyond man's abilities. They are possible only as a result of a gift of God who heals, restores and transforms the human heart by his grace: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17). The promise of eternal life is thus linked to the gift of grace, and the gift of the Spirit which we have received is even now the "guarantee of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14).

24. And so we find revealed the authentic and original aspect of the commandment of love and of the perfection to which it is ordered: we are speaking of *a possibility opened up to man exclusively by grace*, by the gift of God, by his love. On the other hand, precisely the awareness of having received the gift, of possessing in Jesus Christ the love of God, generates and sustains *the*

*free response* of a full love for God and the brethren, as the Apostle John insistently reminds us in his first Letter:

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. . . . We love, because he first loved us" (1 Jn 4: 7-8,11,19).

This inseparable connection between the Lord's grace and human freedom, between gift and task, has been expressed in simple yet profound words by Saint Augustine in his prayer: *Da quod iubes et iube quod vis*" (grant what you command and command what you will).<sup>31</sup>

*The gift does not lessen but reinforces the moral demands of love:* "This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he has commanded us" (1 Jn 3:32). One can "abide" in love only by keeping the commandments, as Jesus states: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (Jn 15:10).

Going to the heart of the moral message of Jesus and the preaching of the Apostles, and summing up in a remarkable way the great tradition of the Fathers of the East and West, and of Saint Augustine in particular,<sup>32</sup> Saint Thomas was able to write that *the New Law is the grace of the Holy Spirit given through faith in Christ*.<sup>33</sup> The external precepts also mentioned in the Gospel dispose one for this grace or produce its effects in one's life. Indeed, the New Law is not content to say what must be done, but also gives the power to "do what is true" (cf. Jn 3:21). Saint John Chrysostom likewise observed that the New Law was promulgated at the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven on the day of Pentecost, and that the Apostles "did not come down from the mountain carrying, like Moses, tablets of stone in their hands; but they came down carrying the Holy Spirit in their hearts..having become by his grace a living law, a living book."<sup>34</sup>

*"Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age"(Mt 28:20)*

25. Jesus' conversation with the rich young man continues, in a sense, *in every period of history, including our own*. The question: "Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?" arises in the heart of every individual, and it is Christ alone who is capable of giving the full and definitive answer. The Teacher who expounds God's commandments, who invites others to follow him and gives the grace for a new life, is always present and at work in our midst, as he himself promised: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). *Christ's relevance for people of all times is shown forth in his body, which is the Church*. For this reason the Lord promised his disciples the Holy Spirit, who would "bring to their remembrance" and teach them to understand his commandments (cf. Jn 14:26), and who would be the principle and constant source of a new life in the world (cf. Jn 3:5-8; Rom 8:1-13).

The moral prescriptions which God imparted in the Old Covenant, and which attained their perfection in the New and Eternal Covenant in the very person of the Son of God made man, must *be faithfully kept and continually put into practice* in the various different cultures throughout the course of history. The task of interpreting these prescriptions was entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles and their successors, with the special assistance of the Spirit of truth: "He who hears you hears me" (Lk 10:16). By the light and the strength of this Spirit the Apostles carried out their mission of preaching the Gospel and of pointing out the "way" of the Lord (cf. Acts 18:25), teaching above all how to follow and imitate Christ: "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21).

26. *In the moral catechesis of the Apostles*, besides exhortations and directions connected to specific historical and cultural situations, we find an ethical teaching with precise rules of behavior.

This is seen in their Letters, which contain the interpretation, made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of the Lord's precepts as they are to be lived in different cultural circumstances (cf. Rom 12-15; 1 Cor 11-14; Gal 5-6; Eph 4-6; Col 3-4; 1 Pt and Jas). From the Church's beginnings, the Apostles, by virtue of their pastoral responsibility to preach the Gospel, *were vigilant over the right conduct of Christians*,<sup>35</sup> just as they were vigilant for the purity of the faith and the handing down of the divine gifts in the sacraments.<sup>36</sup> The first Christians, coming both from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, differed from the pagans not only in their faith and their liturgy but also in the witness of their moral conduct, which was inspired by the New Law.<sup>37</sup> The Church is in fact a communion both of faith and of life; her rule of life is "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6).

No damage must be done to the *harmony between faith and life*: the unity of the Church is damaged not only by Christians who reject or distort the truths of faith but also by those who disregard the moral obligations to which they are called by the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 5:9-13). The Apostles decisively rejected any separation between the commitment of the heart and the actions which express or prove it (cf. 1 Jn 2:3-6). And ever since Apostolic times the Church's Pastors have unambiguously condemned the behavior of those who fostered division by their teaching or by their actions.<sup>38</sup>

27. Within the unity of the Church, promoting and preserving the faith and the moral life is the task entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles (cf. Mt 28:19-20), a task which continues in the ministry of their successors. This is apparent from the *living Tradition*, whereby--as the Second Vatican Council teaches--"the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to every generation all that she is and all that she believes. This Tradition which comes from the Apostles, progresses in the Church under the assistance of the Holy Spirit."<sup>39</sup> In the Holy Spirit, the Church receives and hands down the Scripture as the witness to the "great things" which God has done in history (cf. Lk 1:49); she professes by the lips of her Fathers and Doctors the truth of the Word made flesh, puts his precepts and love into practice in the lives of her Saints and in the sacrifice of her Martyrs, and celebrates her hope in him in the Liturgy. By this same Tradition Christians receive "the living voice of the Gospel,"<sup>40</sup> as the faithful expression of God's wisdom and will.

Within Tradition, *the authentic interpretation* of the Lord's law develops, with the help of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who is at the origin of the Revelation of Jesus' commandments and teachings, guarantees that they will be reverently preserved, faithfully expounded and correctly applied in different times and places. This constant "putting into practice" of the commandments is the sign and fruit of a deeper insight into Revelation and of an understanding in the light of faith of new historical and cultural situations. Nevertheless, it can only confirm the permanent validity of revelation and follow in the line of the interpretation given to it by the great Tradition of the Church's teaching and life, as witnessed by the teaching of the Fathers, the lives of the Saints, the Church's Liturgy and the teaching of the Magisterium.

In particular, as the Council affirms, *"the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether in its written form or in that of Tradition, has been entrusted only to those charged with the Church's living Magisterium, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ"*.<sup>41</sup> The Church, in her life and teaching, is thus revealed as "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tm 3:15), including the truth regarding moral action. Indeed, "the Church has the right always and everywhere to proclaim moral principles, even in respect of the social order, and to make judgments about any human matter insofar as this is required by fundamental human rights or the salvation of souls."<sup>42</sup>

Precisely on the questions frequently debated in moral theology today and with regard to which new tendencies and theories have developed, the Magisterium, in fidelity to Jesus Christ and in continuity with the Church's tradition, senses more urgently the duty to offer its own discernment and teaching, in order to help man in his journey towards truth and freedom.

## CHAPTER II. THE CHURCH AND THE DISCERNMENT OF CERTAIN TENDENCIES IN PRESENT-DAY MORAL THEOLOGY

*"Do not be conformed to this world." (Rom 12"2)  
Teaching What Befits Sound Doctrine (cf. Tit 2:1)*

28. Our meditation on the dialog between Jesus and the rich young man has enabled us to bring together the essential elements of revelation in the Old and New Testament with regard to moral action. These are: the *subordination of man and his activity to God*, the One who "alone is good"; *the relationship between the moral good of human acts and eternal life*; *Christian discipleship*, which opens up before man the perspective of perfect love; and finally the *gift of the Holy Spirit*, source and means of the moral life of the "new creation" (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

In her reflection on morality, *the Church* has always kept in mind the words of Jesus to the rich young man. Indeed, Sacred Scripture remains the living and fruitful source of the Church's moral doctrine; as the Second Vatican Council recalled, the Gospel is "the source of all saving truth and moral teaching."<sup>43</sup> The Church has faithfully preserved what the word of God teaches, not only about truths which must be believed but also about moral action, action pleasing to God (cf. 1 Th 4: 1); she has achieved a *doctrinal development* analogous to that which has taken place in the realm of the truths of faith. Assisted by the Holy Spirit who leads her into all the truth (cf. Jn 16:13), the Church has not ceased, nor can she ever cease, to contemplate the "mystery of the Word Incarnate," in whom "light is shed on the mystery of man."<sup>44</sup>

29. The Church's moral reflection, always conducted in the light of Christ, the "Good Teacher," has also developed in the specific form of the theological science called "*moral theology*," a science which accepts and examines Divine Revelation while at the same time responding to the demands of human reason. Moral theology is a reflection concerned with "morality," with the good and the evil of human acts and of the person who performs them; in this sense it is accessible to all people. But it is also "theology," inasmuch as it acknowledges that the origin and end of moral action are found in the One who "alone is good" and who, by giving himself to man in Christ, offers him the happiness of divine life.

The Second Vatican Council invited scholars to take "*special care for the renewal of moral theology*," in such a way that "its scientific presentation, increasingly based on the teaching of Scripture, will cast light on the exalted vocation of the faithful in Christ and on their obligation to bear fruit in charity for the life of the world."<sup>45</sup> The Council also encouraged theologians, "while respecting the methods and requirements of theological science, to look for a *more appropriate way of communicating* doctrine to the people of their time; since there is a difference between the deposit or the truths of faith and the manner in which they are expressed, keeping the same meaning and the same judgment."<sup>46</sup> This led to a further invitation, one extended to all the faithful, but addressed to theologians in particular: "The faithful should live in the closest contact with others of their time, and should work for a perfect understanding of their modes of thought and feelings as expressed in their culture."<sup>47</sup>



The work of many theologians who found support in the Council's encouragement has already borne fruit in interesting and helpful reflections about the truths of faith to be believed and applied in life, reflections offered in a form better suited to the sensitivities and questions of our contemporaries. The Church, and particularly the Bishops, to whom Jesus Christ primarily entrusted the ministry of teaching, are deeply appreciative of this work, and encourage theologians to continue their efforts, inspired by that profound and authentic "fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom"(cf. Prov 1:7).

At the same time, however, within the context of the theological debates which followed the Council, there have developed *certain interpretations of Christian morality which are not consistent with "sound teaching"* (2 Tm 4:3). Certainly the Church's Magisterium does not intend to impose upon the faithful any particular theological system, still less a philosophical one. Nevertheless, in order to "reverently preserve and faithfully expound" the word of God,<sup>48</sup> the Magisterium has the duty to state that some trends of theological thinking and certain philosophical affirmations are incompatible with revealed truth.<sup>49</sup>

30. In addressing this encyclical to you, my Brother Bishops, it is my intention to state *the principles necessary for discerning what is contrary to "sound doctrine,"* drawing attention to those elements of the Church's moral teaching which today appear particularly exposed to error, ambiguity or neglect. Yet these are the very elements on which there depends "the answer to the obscure riddles of the human condition which today also, as in the past, profoundly disturb the human heart. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of our life? What is good and what is sin? What origin and purpose do sufferings have? What is the way to attain true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? Lastly, what is that final, unutterable mystery which embraces our lives and from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?"<sup>50</sup> These and other questions, such as: what is freedom and what is its relationship to the truth contained in God's law? what is the role of conscience in man's moral development? how do we determine, in accordance with the truth about the good, the specific rights and duties of the human person?--can all be summed up in the fundamental question which the young man in the Gospel put to Jesus: "Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?" Because the Church has been sent by Jesus to preach the Gospel and to "make disciples of all nations . . . , teaching them to observe all" that he has commanded (cf. Mt 28:19-20), *she today once more puts forward the Master's reply,* a reply that possesses a light and a power capable of answering even the most controversial and complex questions. This light and power also impel the Church constantly to carry out not only her dogmatic but also her moral reflection within an interdisciplinary context, which is especially necessary in facing new issues.<sup>51</sup>

It is in the same light and power that *the Church's Magisterium continues to carry out its task of discernment,* accepting and living out the admonition addressed by the Apostle Paul to Timothy:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim 4:1-5; cf. Tit 1:10,13-14).

*"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free " (Jn 8:32)*

31. The human issues most frequently debated and differently resolved in contemporary moral reflection are all closely related, albeit in various ways, to a crucial issue: *human freedom*.

Certainly people today have a particularly strong sense of freedom. As the Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* had already observed, "the dignity of the human person is a concern of which people of our time are becoming increasingly more aware."<sup>52</sup>

Hence the insistent demand that people be permitted to "enjoy the use of their own responsible judgment and freedom, and decide on their actions on grounds of duty and conscience, without external pressure or coercion."<sup>53</sup> In particular, the right to religious freedom and to respect for conscience on its journey towards the truth is increasingly perceived as the foundation of the cumulative rights of the person.<sup>54</sup>

This heightened sense of the dignity of the human person and of his or her uniqueness, and of the respect due to the journey of conscience, certainly represents one of the positive achievements of modern culture. This perception, authentic as it is, has been expressed in a number of more or less adequate ways, some of which however diverge from the truth about man as a creature and the image of God, and thus need to be corrected and purified in the light of faith.<sup>55</sup>

32. Certain currents of modern thought have gone so far as to *exalt freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values*. This is the direction taken by doctrines which have lost the sense of the transcendent or which are explicitly atheistic. The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgment which hands down categorical and infallible decisions about good and evil. To the affirmation that one has a duty to follow one's conscience is unduly added the affirmation that one's moral judgment is true merely by the fact that it has its origin in the conscience. But in this way the inescapable claims of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and "being at peace with oneself," so much so that some have come to adopt a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgment.

As is immediately evident, *the crisis of truth* is not unconnected with this development. Once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. Conscience is no longer considered in its primordial reality as an act of a person's intelligence, the function of which is to apply the universal knowledge of the good in a specific situation and thus to express a judgment about the right conduct to be chosen here and now. Instead, there is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an individualistic ethic, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others. Taken to its extreme consequences, this individualism leads to a denial of the very idea of human nature.

These different notions are at the origin of currents *of thought* which posit a radical opposition between moral law and conscience, and between nature and freedom.

33. *Side by side* with its exaltation of freedom, yet oddly in contrast with it, *modern culture radically questions the very existence of this freedom*. A number of disciplines, grouped under the name of the "behavioral sciences," have rightly drawn attention to the many kinds of psychological and social conditioning which influence the exercise of human freedom. Knowledge of these conditionings and the study they have received represent important achievements which have found application in various areas, for example in pedagogy or the administration of justice. But

some people, going beyond the conclusions which can be legitimately drawn from these observations, have come to question or even deny the very reality of human freedom.

Mention should also be made here of theories which misuse scientific research about the human person. Arguing from the great variety of customs, behavior patterns and institutions present in humanity, these theories end up, if not with an outright denial of universal human values, at least with a relativistic conception of morality.

34. "Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?" *The question of morality*, to which Christ provides the answer, *cannot prescind from the issue of freedom. Indeed, it considers that issue central*, for there can be no morality without freedom: "It is only in freedom that man can turn to what is good."<sup>56</sup> *But what sort of freedom?* The Council, considering our contemporaries who "highly regard" freedom and "assiduously pursue" it, but who "often cultivate it in wrong ways as a license to do anything they please, even evil," speaks of "*genuine*" freedom: "Genuine freedom is an outstanding manifestation of the divine image in man. For God willed to leave man 'in the power of his own counsel' (cf. Sir 15:14), so that he would seek his Creator of his own accord and would freely arrive at full and blessed perfection by cleaving to God."<sup>57</sup> Although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known.<sup>58</sup> As Cardinal John Henry Newman, that outstanding defender of the rights of conscience, forcefully put it: "Conscience has rights because it has duties."<sup>59</sup>

Certain tendencies in contemporary moral theology, under the influence of the currents of subjectivism and individualism just mentioned, involve novel interpretations of the relationship of freedom to the moral law, human nature and conscience, and propose novel criteria for the moral evaluation of acts. Despite their variety, these tendencies are at one in lessening or even denying the *dependence of freedom on truth*.

If we wish to undertake a critical discernment of these tendencies--a discernment capable of acknowledging what is legitimate, useful and of value in them, while at the same time pointing out their ambiguities, dangers and errors--we must examine them in the light of the fundamental dependence of freedom upon truth, a dependence which has found its clearest and most authoritative expression in the words of Christ: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32).

#### I. Freedom and Law

*"Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Gen 2:17)*

35. In the Book of Genesis we read: "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may eat freely of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'" (Gen 2:16-17).

With this imagery, Revelation teaches that *the power to decide what is good and what is evil does not belong to man, but to God alone*. The man is certainly free, inasmuch as he can understand and accept God's commands. And he possesses an extremely far-reaching freedom, since he can eat "of every tree of the garden." But his freedom is not unlimited: it must halt before the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," for it is called to accept the moral law given by God. In fact, human freedom finds its authentic and complete fulfillment precisely in the acceptance of that law. God, who alone is good, knows perfectly what is good for man, and by virtue of his very love proposes this good to man in the commandments.

God's law does not reduce, much less do away with human freedom; rather, it protects and promotes that freedom. In contrast, however, some present-day cultural tendencies have given rise to several currents of thought in ethics which center upon *an alleged conflict between freedom and law*. These doctrines would grant to individuals or social groups the right to *determine what is good or evil*. Human freedom would thus be able to "create values" and would enjoy a primacy over truth, to the point that truth itself would be considered a creation of freedom. Freedom would thus lay claim to a *moral autonomy* which would actually amount to an *absolute sovereignty*.

36. The modern concern for the claims of autonomy has not failed to exercise an *influence also in the sphere of Catholic moral theology*. While the latter has certainly never attempted to set human freedom against the divine law or to question the existence of an ultimate religious foundation for moral norms, it has, nonetheless, been led to undertake a profound rethinking about the role of reason and of faith in identifying moral norms with reference to specific "innerworldly" kinds of behavior involving oneself, others and the material world.

It must be acknowledged that underlying this work of rethinking there are *certain positive concerns* which to a great extent belong to the best tradition of Catholic thought. In response to the encouragement of the Second Vatican Council,<sup>60</sup> there has been a desire to foster dialog with modern culture, emphasizing the rational--and thus universally understandable and communicable--character of moral norms belonging to the sphere of the natural moral law.<sup>61</sup> There has also been an attempt to reaffirm the interior character of the ethical requirements deriving from that law, requirements which create an obligation for the will only because such an obligation was previously acknowledged by human reason and, concretely, by personal conscience.

Some people, however, disregarding the dependence of human reason on Divine Wisdom and the need, given the present state of fallen nature, for Divine Revelation as an effective means for knowing moral truths, even those of the natural order,<sup>62</sup> have actually posited a *complete sovereignty of reason* in the domain of moral norms regarding the right ordering of life in this world. Such norms would constitute the boundaries for a merely "human" morality; they would be the expression of a law which man in an autonomous manner lays down for himself and which has its source exclusively in human reason. In no way could God be considered the Author of this law, except in the sense that human reason exercises its autonomy in setting down laws by virtue of a primordial and total mandate given to man by God. These trends of thought have led to a denial, in opposition to Sacred Scripture (cf. Mt 15:3-6) and the Church's constant teaching, of the fact that the natural moral law has God as its Author, and that man, by the use of reason, participates in the eternal law, which it is not for him to establish.

37. In their desire, however, to keep the moral life in a Christian context, certain moral theologians have introduced a sharp distinction, contrary to Catholic doctrine,<sup>63</sup> between an *ethical order*, which would be human in origin and of value for *this world* alone, and an *order of salvation*, for which only certain intentions and interior attitudes regarding God and neighbor would be significant. This has then led to an actual denial that there exists, in Divine Revelation, a specific and determined moral content, universally valid and permanent. The word of God would be limited to proposing an exhortation, a generic paraenesis, which the autonomous reason alone would then have the task of completing with normative directives which are truly "objective," that is, adapted to the concrete historical situation. Naturally, an autonomy conceived in this way also involves the denial of a specific doctrinal competence on the part of the Church and her Magisterium with regard to particular moral norms which deal with the so-called "human

good." Such norms would not be part of the proper content of Revelation, and would not in themselves be relevant for salvation. No one can fail to see that such an interpretation of the autonomy of human reason involves positions incompatible with Catholic teaching.

In such a context it is absolutely necessary to clarify, in the light of the word of God and the living Tradition of the Church, the fundamental notions of human freedom and of the moral law, as well as their profound and intimate relationship. Only thus will it be possible to respond to the rightful claims of human reason in a way which accepts the valid elements present in certain currents of contemporary moral theology without compromising the Church's heritage of moral teaching with ideas derived from an erroneous concept of autonomy.

*"God left man in the power of his own counsel" (Sir 15:14)*

38. Taking up the words of Sirach, the Second Vatican Council explains the meaning of that "genuine freedom" which is "an outstanding manifestation of the divine image" in man: "God willed to leave man in the power of his own counsel, so that he would seek his Creator of his own accord and would freely arrive at full and blessed perfection by cleaving to God."<sup>64</sup> These words indicate the wonderful depth of the *sharing in God's dominion* to which man has been called: they indicate that man's dominion extends in a certain sense over man himself. This has been a constantly recurring theme in theological reflection on human freedom, which is described as a form of kingship. For example, Saint Gregory of Nyssa writes:

The soul shows its royal and exalted character . . . in that it is free and self-governed, swayed autonomously by its own will. Of whom else can this be said, save a king . . . ? Thus human nature, created to rule other creatures, was by its likeness to the King of the universe made as it were a living image, partaking with the Archetype both in dignity and in name.<sup>65</sup>

*The exercise of dominion over the world* represents a great and responsible task for man, one which involves his freedom in obedience to the Creator's command: "Fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28). In view of this, a rightful autonomy is due to every man, as well as to the human community, a fact to which the Council's Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* calls special attention. This is the autonomy of earthly realities, which means that "created things have their own laws and values which are to be gradually discovered, utilized and ordered by man."<sup>66</sup>

39. Not only the world, however, but also *man himself* has been *entrusted to his own care and responsibility*. God left man "in the power of his own counsel" (Sir 15:14), that he might seek his Creator and freely attain perfection. Attaining such perfection means *personally building up that perfection in himself*. Indeed, just as man in exercising his dominion over the world shapes it in accordance with his own intelligence and will, so too in performing morally good acts, man strengthens, develops and consolidates within himself his likeness to God.

Even so, the Council warns against a false concept of the autonomy of earthly realities, one which would maintain that "created things are not dependent on God and that man can use them without reference to their Creator."<sup>67</sup> With regard to man himself, such a concept of autonomy produces particularly baneful effects, and eventually leads to atheism: "Without its Creator the creature simply disappears. . . . If God is ignored the creature itself is impoverished."<sup>68</sup>

40. The teaching of the Council emphasizes, on the one hand, *the role of human reason* in discovering and applying the moral law: the moral life calls for that creativity and originality typical of the person, the source and cause of his own deliberate acts. On the other hand, reason draws its own truth and authority from the eternal law, which is none other than divine wisdom

itself.<sup>69</sup> At the heart of the moral life we thus find the principle of a "rightful autonomy"<sup>70</sup> of man, the personal subject of his actions. *The moral law has its origin in God and always finds its source in him*: at the same time, by virtue of natural reason, which derives from divine wisdom, it is a *properly human law*. Indeed, as we have seen, the natural law "is nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God, whereby we understand what must be done and what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation."<sup>71</sup> The rightful autonomy of the practical reason means that man possesses in himself his own law, received from the Creator. Nevertheless, *the autonomy of reason cannot mean that reason itself creates values and moral norms*.<sup>72</sup> Were this autonomy to imply a denial of the participation of the practical reason in the wisdom of the divine Creator and Lawgiver, or were it to suggest a freedom which creates moral norms, on the basis of historical contingencies or the diversity of societies and cultures, this sort of alleged autonomy would contradict the Church's teaching on the truth about man.<sup>73</sup> It would be the death of true freedom: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17).

41. Man's *genuine moral autonomy* in no way means the rejection but rather the acceptance of the moral law, of God's command: "The Lord God gave this command to the man . . ." (Gen 2:16). *Human freedom and God's law meet and are called to intersect*, in the sense of man's free obedience to God and of God's completely gratuitous benevolence towards man. Hence obedience to God is not, as some would believe, a *heteronomy*, as if the moral life were subject to the will of something all-powerful, absolute, extraneous to man and intolerant of his freedom. If in fact a heteronomy of morality were to mean a denial of man's self-determination or the imposition of norms unrelated to his good, this would be in contradiction to the Revelation of the Covenant and of the redemptive Incarnation. Such a heteronomy would be nothing but a form of alienation, contrary to divine wisdom and to the dignity of the human person.

Others speak, and rightly so, of *theonomy*, or *participated theonomy*, since man's free obedience to God's law effectively implies that human reason and human will participate in God's wisdom and providence. By forbidding man to "eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," God makes it clear that man does not originally possess such "knowledge" as something properly his own, but only participates in it by the light of natural reason and of Divine Revelation, which manifest to him the requirements and the promptings of eternal wisdom. Law must therefore be considered an expression of divine wisdom: by submitting to the law, freedom submits to the truth of creation. Consequently one must acknowledge in the freedom of the human person the image and the nearness of God, who is present in all (cf. Eph 4:6). But one must likewise acknowledge the majesty of the God of the universe and revere the holiness of the law of God, who is infinitely transcendent: *Deus semper maior*.<sup>74</sup>

*Blessed is the Man Who Takes Delight in the Law of the Lord (cf. Ps 1:1-2)*

42. Patterned on God's freedom, man's freedom is not negated by his obedience to the divine law; indeed, only through this obedience does it abide in the truth and conform to human dignity. This is clearly stated by the Council: "Human dignity requires man to act through conscious and free choice, as motivated and prompted personally from within, and not through blind internal impulse or merely external pressure. Man achieves such dignity when he frees himself from all subservience to his feelings, and in a free choice of the good, pursues his own end by effectively and assiduously marshaling the appropriate means."<sup>75</sup>

In his journey towards God, the One who "alone is good," man must freely do good and avoid evil. But in order to accomplish this he must *be able to distinguish good from evil*. And this takes place above all *thanks to the light of natural reason*, the reflection in man of the splendor of God's countenance. Thus Saint Thomas, commenting on a verse of Psalm 4, writes: "After saying: Offer right sacrifices (Ps 4:5), as if some had then asked him what right works were, the Psalmist adds: *There are many who say: Who will make us see good?* And in reply to the question he says: *The light of your face, Lord, is signed upon us*, thereby implying that the light of natural reason whereby we discern good from evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing else but an imprint on us of the divine light."<sup>76</sup> It also becomes clear why this law is called the natural law: it receives this name not because it refers to the nature of irrational beings but because the reason which promulgates it is proper to human nature.<sup>77</sup>

43. The Second Vatican Council points out that the "supreme rule of life is the divine law itself, the eternal, objective and universal law by which God out of his wisdom and love arranges, directs and governs the whole world and the paths of the human community. God has enabled man to share in this divine law, and hence man is able under the gentle guidance of God's providence increasingly to recognize the unchanging truth."<sup>78</sup>

The Council refers to the classic teaching on God's *eternal law*. Saint Augustine defines this as "the reason or the will of God, who commands us to respect the natural order and forbids us to disturb it."<sup>79</sup> Saint Thomas identifies it with "the type of the divine wisdom as moving all things to their due end."<sup>80</sup> And God's wisdom is providence, a love which cares. God himself loves and cares, in the most literal and basic sense, for all creation (cf. Wis 7:22; 8:11). But God provides for man differently from the way in which he provides for beings which are not persons. He cares for man not "from without," through the laws of physical nature, but "from within," through reason, which, by its natural knowledge of God's eternal law, is consequently able to show man the right direction to take in his free actions.<sup>81</sup> In this way God calls man to participate in his own providence, since he desires to guide the world--not only the world of nature but also the world of human persons--through man himself, through man's reasonable and responsible care. The *natural law* enters here as the human expression of God's eternal law. Saint Thomas writes: "Among all others, the rational creature is subject to divine providence in the most excellent way, insofar as it partakes of a share of providence, being provident both for itself and for others. Thus it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end. This participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called natural law."<sup>82</sup>

44. The Church has often made reference to the Thomistic doctrine of natural law, including it in her own teaching on morality. Thus my Venerable Predecessor Leo XIII emphasized *the essential subordination of reason and human law to the Wisdom of God and to his law*. After stating that "the *natural law* is written and engraved in the heart of each and every man, since it is none other than human reason itself which commands us to do good and counsels us not to sin," Leo XIII appealed to the "higher reason" of the divine Lawgiver: "But this prescription of human reason could not have the force of law unless it were the voice and the interpreter of some higher reason to which our spirit and our freedom must be subject." Indeed, the force of law consists in its authority to impose duties, to confer rights and to sanction certain behavior: "Now all of this, clearly could not exist in man if, as his own supreme legislator, he gave himself the rule of his own actions." And he concluded: "It follows that the natural law is *itself the eternal law*, implanted in

beings endowed with reason, and inclining them *towards their right action and end*; it is none other than the eternal reason of the Creator and Ruler of the universe."<sup>83</sup>

Man is able to recognize good and evil thanks to that discernment of good from evil which he himself carries out by his *reason, in particular by his reason enlightened by Divine Revelation and by faith*, through the law which God gave to the Chosen People, beginning with the commandments on Sinai. Israel was called to accept and to live out *God's law as a particular gift and sign of its election and of the divine Covenant*, and also as a pledge of God's blessing. Thus Moses could address the children of Israel and ask them: "What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?" (Dt 4:7-8). In the Psalms we encounter the sentiments of praise, gratitude and veneration which the Chosen People is called to show towards God's law, together with an exhortation to know it, ponder it and translate it into life. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps 1:1-2). "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps 18/19:8-9).

45. The Church gratefully accepts and lovingly preserves the entire deposit of Revelation, treating it with religious respect and fulfilling her mission of authentically interpreting God's law in the light of the Gospel. In addition, the Church receives the gift of the New Law, which is the "fulfillment" of God's law in Jesus Christ and in his Spirit. This is an "interior" law (cf. Jer 31:31-33), "written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Cor 3:3); a law of perfection and of freedom (cf. 2 Cor 3:17); "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:2). Saint Thomas writes that this law "can be called law in two ways. First, the law of the spirit is the Holy Spirit . . . who, dwelling in the soul, not only teaches what it is necessary to do by enlightening the intellect on the things to be done, but also inclines the affections to act with uprightness. . . . Second, the law of the spirit can be called the proper effect of the Holy Spirit, and thus faith working through love (cf. Gal 5:6), which teaches inwardly about the things to be done . . . and inclines the affections to act."<sup>84</sup>

Even if moral-theological reflection usually distinguishes between the positive or revealed law of God and the natural law, and, within the economy of salvation, between the "old" and the "new" law, it must not be forgotten that these and other useful distinctions always refer to that law whose author is the one and the same God and which is always meant for man. The different ways in which God, acting in history, cares for the world and for mankind are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they support each other and intersect. They have their origin and goal in the eternal, wise and loving counsel whereby God predestines men and women "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29). God's plan poses no threat to man's genuine freedom; on the contrary, the acceptance of God's plan is the only way to affirm that freedom.

*"What the law requires is written on their hearts" (Rom 2:15)*

46. The alleged conflict between freedom and law is forcefully brought up once again today with regard to the natural law, and particularly with regard to nature. *Debates about nature and freedom* have always marked the history of moral reflection; they grew especially heated at the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, as can be seen from the teaching of the Council of



Trent.<sup>85</sup> Our own age is marked, though in a different sense, by a similar tension. The penchant for empirical observation, the procedures of scientific objectification, technological progress and certain forms of liberalism have led to these two terms being set in opposition, as if a dialectic, if not an absolute conflict, between freedom and nature were characteristic of the structure of human history. At other periods, it seemed that "nature" subjected man totally to its own dynamics and even its own unbreakable laws. Today too, the situation of the world of the senses within space and time, physio-chemical constants, bodily processes, psychological impulses and forms of social conditioning seem to many people the only really decisive factors of human reality. In this context even moral facts, despite their specificity, are frequently treated as if they were statistically verifiable data, patterns of behavior which can be subject to observation or explained exclusively in categories of psychosocial processes. As a result, *some ethicists*, professionally engaged in the study of human realities and behavior, can be tempted to take as the standard for their discipline and even for its operative norms the results of a statistical study of concrete human behavior patterns and the opinions about morality encountered in the majority of people.

*Other moralists*, however, in their concern to stress the importance of values, remain sensitive to the dignity of freedom, but they frequently conceive of freedom as somehow in opposition to or in conflict with material and biological nature, over which it must progressively assert itself. Here various approaches are at one in overlooking the created dimension of nature and in misunderstanding its integrity. *For some*, "nature" becomes reduced to raw material for human activity and for its power: thus nature needs to be profoundly transformed, and indeed overcome by freedom, inasmuch as it represents a limitation and denial of freedom. *For others*, it is in the untrammelled advancement of man's power, or of his freedom, that economic, cultural, social and even moral values are established: nature would thus come to mean everything found in man and the world apart from freedom. In such an understanding, nature would include in the first place the human body, its make-up and its processes: against this physical datum would be opposed whatever is "constructed," in other words "culture," seen as the product and result of freedom. Human nature, understood in this way, could be reduced to and treated as a readily available biological or social material. This ultimately means making freedom self-defining and a phenomenon creative of itself and its values. Indeed, when all is said and done man would not even have a nature; he would be his own personal life-project. Man would be nothing more than his own freedom!

47. In this context, *objections of physicalism and naturalism* have been leveled against the traditional conception of *the natural law*, which is accused of presenting as moral laws what are in themselves mere biological laws. Consequently, in too superficial a way, a permanent and unchanging character would be attributed to certain kinds of human behavior, and, on the basis of this, an attempt would be made to formulate universally valid moral norms. According to certain theologians, this kind of "biologistic or naturalistic argumentation" would even be present in certain documents of the Church's Magisterium, particularly those dealing with the area of sexual and conjugal ethics. It was, they maintain, on the basis of a naturalistic understanding of the sexual act that contraception, direct sterilization, auto-eroticism, premarital sexual relations, homosexual relations and artificial insemination were condemned as morally unacceptable. In the opinion of these same theologians, a morally negative evaluation of such acts fails to take into adequate consideration both man's character as a rational and free being and the cultural conditioning of all moral norms. In their view, man, as a rational being, not only can but actually *must freely determine the meaning* of his behavior. This process of "determining the meaning" would

obviously have to take into account the many limitations of the human being, as existing in a body and in history. Furthermore, it would have to take into consideration the behavioral models and the meanings which the latter acquire in any given culture. Above all, it would have to respect the fundamental commandment of love of God and neighbor. Still, they continue, God made man as a rationally free being; he left him "in the power of his own counsel" and he expects him to shape his life in a personal and rational way. Love of neighbor would mean above all and even exclusively respect for his freedom to make his own decisions. The workings of typically human behavior, as well as the so-called "natural inclinations," would establish at the most--so they say--general orientation towards correct behavior, but they cannot determine the moral assessment of individual human acts, so complex from the viewpoint of situations.

48. Faced with this theory, one has to consider carefully the correct relationship existing between freedom and human nature, and in particular *the place of the human body in questions of natural law*.

A freedom which claims to be absolute ends up treating the human body as a raw datum, devoid of any meaning and moral values until freedom has shaped it in accordance with its design. Consequently, human nature and the body appear as *presuppositions or preambles*, materially *necessary*, for freedom to make its choice, yet extrinsic to the person, the subject and the human act. Their functions would not be able to constitute reference points for moral decisions, because the finalities of these inclinations would be merely "*physical*" goods, called by some "pre-moral." To refer to them, in order to find in them rational indications with regard to the order of morality, would be to expose oneself to the accusation of physicalism or biologist. In this way of thinking, the tension between freedom and a nature conceived of in a reductive way is resolved by a division within man himself.

This moral theory does not correspond to the truth about man and his freedom. It contradicts the *Church's teachings on the unity of the human person*, whose rational soul is *per se et essentialiter* the form of his body.<sup>86</sup> The spiritual and immortal soul is the principle of unity of the human being, whereby it exists as a whole--*corpore et anima unus*<sup>87</sup>--as a person. These definitions not only point out that the body, which has been promised the resurrection, will also share in glory. They also remind us that reason and free will are linked with all the bodily and sense faculties. *The person, including the body, is completely entrusted to himself and it is in the unity of body and soul that the person is the subject of his own moral acts.* The person, by the light of reason and the support of virtue, discovers in the body the anticipatory signs, the expression and the promise of the gift of self, in conformity with the wise plan of the Creator. It is in the light of the dignity of the human person--dignity which must be affirmed for its own sake--that reason grasps the specific moral value of certain goods towards which the person is naturally inclined. And since the human person cannot be reduced to a freedom which is self-designing, but entails a particular spiritual and bodily structure, the primordial moral requirement of loving and respecting the person as an end and never as a mere means also implies, by its very nature, respect for certain fundamental goods, without which one would fall into relativism and arbitrariness.

49. *A doctrine which dissociates the moral act from the bodily dimensions of its exercise is contrary to the teaching of Scripture and Tradition.* Such a doctrine revives, in new forms, certain ancient errors which have always been opposed by the Church, inasmuch as they reduce the human person to a "spiritual" and purely formal freedom. This reduction misunderstands the moral meaning of the body and of kinds of behavior involving it (cf. 1 Cor 6:19). Saint Paul declares that

"the immoral, idolaters, adulterers, sexual perverts, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers" are excluded from the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 6:9). This condemnation--repeated by the Council of Trent<sup>88</sup>--lists as "mortal sins" or "immoral practices" certain specific kinds of behavior the willful acceptance of which prevents believers from sharing in the inheritance promised to them.

In fact, *body and soul are inseparable*: in the person, in the willing agent and in the deliberate act *they stand or fall together*.

50. At this point the true meaning of the natural law can be understood: it refers to man's proper and primordial nature, the "nature of the human person,"<sup>89</sup> which is *the person himself in the unity of soul and body*, in the unity of his spiritual and biological inclinations and of all the other specific characteristics necessary for the pursuit of his end. "The natural moral law expresses and lays down the purposes, rights and duties which are based upon the bodily and spiritual nature of the human person. Therefore this law cannot be thought of as simply a set of norms on the biological level; rather it must be defined as the rational order whereby man is called by the Creator to direct and regulate his life and actions and in particular to make use of his own body."<sup>90</sup> To give an example, the origin and the foundation of the duty of absolute respect for human life are to be found in the dignity proper to the person and not simply in the natural inclination to preserve one's own physical life. Human life, even though it is a fundamental good of man, thus acquires a moral significance in reference to the good of the person, who must always be affirmed for his own sake. While it is always morally illicit to kill an innocent human being, it can be licit, praiseworthy or even imperative to give up one's own life (cf. Jn 15:13) out of love of neighbor or as a witness to the truth. Only in reference to the human person in his "unified totality," that is, as "a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit,"<sup>91</sup> can the specifically human meaning of the body be grasped. Indeed, natural inclinations take on moral relevance only insofar as they refer to the human person and his authentic fulfillment, a fulfillment which for that matter can take place always and only in human nature. By rejecting all manipulations of corporeity which alter its human meaning, the Church serves man and shows him the path of true love, the only path on which he can find the true God.

The natural law thus understood does not allow for any division between freedom and nature. Indeed, these two realities are harmoniously bound together, and each is intimately linked to the other.

*"From the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19:8)*

51. The alleged conflict between freedom and nature also has repercussions on the interpretation of certain specific aspects of the natural law, especially its *universality and immutability*. "Where then are these rules written," Saint Augustine wondered,

except in the book of that light which is called truth? From thence every just law is transcribed and transferred to the heart of the man who works justice, not by wandering but by being, as it were, impressed upon it, just as the image from the ring passes over to the wax, and yet does not leave the ring.<sup>92</sup>

Precisely because of this "truth" *the natural law involves universality*. Inasmuch as it is inscribed in the rational nature of the person, it makes itself felt to all beings endowed with reason and living in history. In order to perfect himself in his specific order, the person must do good and avoid evil, be concerned for the transmission and preservation of life, refine and develop the riches of the material world, cultivate social life, seek truth, practice good and contemplate beauty.<sup>93</sup>

The separation which some have posited between the freedom of individuals and the nature which all have in common--as it emerges from certain philosophical theories which are highly influential in present-day culture--obscures the perception of the universality of the moral law on the part of reason. But inasmuch as the natural law expresses the dignity of the human person and lays the foundation for his fundamental rights and duties, it is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all mankind. *This universality does not ignore the individuality of human beings*, nor is it opposed to the absolute uniqueness of each person. On the contrary, it embraces at its root each of the person's free acts, which are meant to bear witness to the universality of the true good. By submitting to the common law, our acts build up the true communion of persons and, by God's grace, practice charity, "which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14). When on the contrary they disregard the law, or even are merely ignorant of it, whether culpably or not, our acts damage the communion of persons, to the detriment of each.

52. It is right and just, always and for everyone, to serve God, to render him the worship which is his due and to honor one's parents as they deserve. Positive precepts such as these, which order us to perform certain actions and to cultivate certain dispositions, are universally binding; they are "unchanging."<sup>94</sup> They unite in the same common good all people of every period of history, created for "the same divine calling and destiny."<sup>95</sup> These universal and permanent laws correspond to things known by the practical reason and are applied to particular acts through the judgment of conscience. The acting subject personally assimilates the truth contained in the law. He appropriates this truth of his being and makes it his own by his acts and the corresponding virtues. The *negative precepts* of the natural law are universally valid. They oblige each and every individual, always and in every circumstance. It is a matter of prohibitions which forbid a given action *semper et pro semper*, without exception, because the choice of this kind of behavior is in no case compatible with the goodness of the will of the acting person, with his vocation to life with God and to communion with his neighbor. It is prohibited--to everyone and in every case--to violate these precepts. They oblige everyone, regardless of the cost, never to offend in anyone, beginning with oneself, the personal dignity common to all.

On the other hand, the fact that only the negative commandments oblige always and under all circumstances does not mean that in the moral life prohibitions are more important than the obligation to do good indicated by the positive commandments. The reason is this: the commandment of love of God and neighbor does not have in its dynamic any higher limit, but it does have a lower limit, beneath which the commandment is broken. Furthermore, what must be done in any given situation depends on the circumstances, not all of which can be foreseen; on the other hand there are kinds of behavior which can never, in any situation, be a proper response--a response which is in conformity with the dignity of the person. Finally, it is always possible that man, as the result of coercion or other circumstances, can be hindered from doing certain good actions; but he can never be hindered from not doing certain actions, especially if he is prepared to die rather than to do evil.

The Church has always taught that one may never choose kinds of behavior prohibited by the moral commandments expressed in negative form in the Old and New Testaments. As we have seen, Jesus himself reaffirms that these prohibitions allow no exceptions: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. . . . You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness" (Mt 19:17-18).

53. The great concern of our contemporaries for historicity and for culture has led some to call into question *the immutability of the natural law* itself, and thus the existence of "objective norms of morality"<sup>96</sup> valid for all people of the present and the future, as for those of the past. Is it ever possible, they ask, to consider as universally valid and always binding certain rational determinations established in the past, when no one knew the progress humanity would make in the future?

It must certainly be admitted that man always exists in a particular culture, but it must also be admitted that man is not exhaustively defined by that same culture. Moreover, the very progress of cultures demonstrates that there is something in man which transcends those cultures. This "something" is precisely human nature: this nature is itself the measure of culture and the condition ensuring that man does not become the prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being. To call into question the permanent structural elements of man which are connected with his own bodily dimension would not only conflict with common experience, but would render meaningless *Jesus' reference to the "beginning,"* precisely where the social and cultural context of the time had distorted the primordial meaning and the role of certain moral norms (cf. Mt 19:1-9). This is the reason why "the Church affirms that underlying so many changes there are some things which do not change and are ultimately founded upon Christ, who is the same yesterday and today and for ever."<sup>97</sup> Christ is the "Beginning" who, having taken on human nature, definitively illumines it in its constitutive elements and in its dynamism of charity towards God and neighbor.<sup>98</sup>

Certainly there is a need to seek out and to discover *the most adequate formulation* for universal and permanent moral norms in the light of different cultural contexts, a formulation most capable of ceaselessly expressing their historical relevance, of making them understood and of authentically interpreting their truth. This truth of the moral law--like that of the "deposit of faith"--unfolds down the centuries: the norms expressing that truth remain valid in their substance, but must be specified and determined "*eodem sensu eademque sententia*"<sup>99</sup> in the light of historical circumstances by the Church's Magisterium, whose decision is preceded and accompanied by the work of interpretation and formulation characteristic of the reason of individual believers and of theological reflection.<sup>100</sup>

## II. Conscience and Truth

### *Man's Sanctuary*

54. The relationship between man's freedom and God's law is most deeply lived out in the "heart" of the person, in his moral conscience. As the Second Vatican Council observed: "In the depths of his conscience man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil. The voice of conscience can when necessary speak to his heart more specifically: 'do this, shun that.' For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged (cf. Rom 2:14-16)."<sup>101</sup>

The way in which one conceives the relationship between freedom and law is thus intimately bound up with one's understanding of the moral conscience. Here the cultural tendencies referred to above--in which freedom and law are set in opposition to each another and kept apart, and freedom is exalted almost to the point of idolatry--lead to a "*creative*" *understanding of moral conscience*, which diverges from the teaching of the Church's tradition and her Magisterium.

55. According to the opinion of some theologians, the function of conscience had been reduced, at least at a certain period in the past, to a simple application of general moral norms to individual cases in the life of the person. But those norms, they continue, cannot be expected to foresee and to respect all the individual concrete acts of the person in all their uniqueness and particularity. While such norms might somehow be useful for a correct *assessment* of the situation, they cannot replace the individual personal *decision* on how to act in particular cases. The critique already mentioned of the traditional understanding of human nature and of its importance for the moral life has even led certain authors to state that these norms are not so much a binding objective criterion for judgments of conscience, but a *general perspective* which helps man tentatively to put order into his personal and social life. These authors also stress the *complexity* typical of the phenomenon of conscience, a complexity profoundly related to the whole sphere of psychology and the emotions, and to the numerous influences exerted by the individual's social and cultural environment. On the other hand, they give maximum attention to the value of conscience, which the Council itself defined as "the sanctuary of man, where he is alone with God whose voice echoes within him."<sup>102</sup> This voice, it is said, leads man not so much to a meticulous observance of universal norms as to a creative and responsible acceptance of the personal tasks entrusted to him by God.

In their desire to emphasize the "creative" character of conscience, certain authors no longer call its actions "judgments" but "decisions": only by making these decisions "autonomously" would man be able to attain moral maturity. Some even hold that this process of maturing is inhibited by the excessively categorical position adopted by the Church's Magisterium in many moral questions; for them, the Church's interventions are the cause of unnecessary *conflicts of conscience*.

56. In order to justify these positions, some authors have proposed a kind of double status of moral truth. Beyond the doctrinal and abstract level, one would have to acknowledge the priority of a certain more concrete existential consideration. The latter, by taking account of circumstances and the situation, could legitimately be the basis of certain *exceptions to the general rule* and thus permit one to do in practice and in good conscience what is qualified as intrinsically evil by the moral law. A separation, or even an opposition, is thus established in some cases between the teaching of the precept, which is valid in general, and the norm of the individual conscience, which would in fact make the final decision about what is good and what is evil. On this basis, an attempt is made to legitimize so-called "pastoral" solutions contrary to the teaching of the Magisterium, and to justify a "creative" hermeneutic according to which the moral conscience is in no way obliged, in every case, by a particular negative precept.

No one can fail to realize that these approaches pose a challenge to the *very identity of the moral conscience* in relation to human freedom and God's law. Only the clarification made earlier with regard to the relationship, based on truth, between freedom and law makes possible a *discernment concerning this "creative" understanding of conscience*.

#### *The Judgment of Conscience*

57. The text of the Letter to the Romans which has helped us to grasp the essence of the natural law also indicates *the biblical understanding of conscience, especially in its specific connection with the law*:

When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law unto themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written

on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them" (Rom 2:14-15).

According to Saint Paul, conscience in a certain sense confronts man with the law, and thus becomes a "*witness*" for man: a witness of his own faithfulness or unfaithfulness with regard to the law, of his essential moral rectitude or iniquity. Conscience is the *only* witness, since what takes place in the heart of the person is hidden from the eyes of everyone outside. Conscience makes its witness known only to the person himself. And, in turn, only the person himself knows what his own response is to the voice of conscience.

58. The importance of this interior *dialog of man with himself* can never be adequately appreciated. But it is also a *dialog of man with God*, the author of the law, the primordial image and final end of man. Saint Bonaventure teaches that "conscience is like God's herald and messenger; it does not command things on its own authority, but commands them as coming from God's authority, like a herald when he proclaims the edict of the king. This is why conscience has binding force."<sup>103</sup> Thus it can be said that conscience bears witness to man's own rectitude or iniquity to man himself but, together with this and indeed even beforehand, conscience is *the witness of God himself*, whose voice and judgment penetrate the depths of man's soul, calling him *fortiter et suaviter* to obedience. "Moral conscience does not close man within an insurmountable and impenetrable solitude, but opens him to the call, to the voice of God. In this, and not in anything else, lies the entire mystery and the dignity of the moral conscience: in being the place, the sacred place where God speaks to man."<sup>104</sup>

59. Saint Paul does not merely acknowledge that conscience acts as a "witness"; he also reveals the way in which conscience performs that function. He speaks of "conflicting thoughts" which accuse or excuse the Gentiles with regard to their behavior (cf. Rom 2:15). The term "conflicting thoughts" clarifies the precise nature of conscience: it is a *moral judgment about man and his actions*, a judgment either of acquittal or of condemnation, according as human acts are in conformity or not with the law of God written on the heart. In the same text the Apostle clearly speaks of the judgment of actions, the judgment of their author and the moment when that judgment will be definitively rendered: "(This will take place) on that day when, according to my Gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (Rom 2:16).

The judgment of conscience is a *practical judgment*, a judgment which makes known what man must do or not do, or which assesses an act already performed by him. It is a judgment which applies to a concrete situation the rational conviction that one must love and do good and avoid evil. This first principle of practical reason is part of the natural law; indeed it constitutes the very foundation of the natural law, inasmuch as it expresses that primordial insight about good and evil, that reflection of God's creative wisdom which, like an imperishable spark (*scintilla animae*), shines in the heart of every man. But whereas the natural law discloses the objective and universal demands of the moral good, conscience is the application of the law to a particular case; this application of the law thus becomes an inner dictate for the individual, a summons to do what is good in this particular situation. Conscience thus formulates *moral obligation* in the light of the natural law: it is the obligation to do what the individual, through the workings of his conscience, *knows* to be a good he is called to do *here and now*. The universality of the law and its obligation are acknowledged, not suppressed, once reason has established the law's application in concrete present circumstances. The judgment of conscience states "in an ultimate way" whether

a certain particular kind of behavior is in conformity with the law; it formulates the proximate norm of the morality of a voluntary act, "applying the objective law to a particular case."<sup>105</sup>

60. Like the natural law itself and all practical knowledge, the judgment of conscience also has an imperative character: man must act in accordance with it. If man acts against this judgment or, in a case where he lacks certainty about the rightness and goodness of a determined act, still performs that act, he stands condemned by his own conscience, *the proximate norm of personal morality*. The dignity of this rational forum and the authority of its voice and judgments derive from the *truth* about moral good and evil, which it is called to listen to and to express. This truth is indicated by the "divine law," *the universal and objective norm of morality*. The judgment of conscience does not establish the law; rather it bears witness to the authority of the natural law and of the practical reason with reference to the supreme good, whose attractiveness the human person perceives and whose commandments he accepts. "Conscience is not an independent and exclusive capacity to decide what is good and what is evil. Rather there is profoundly imprinted upon it a principle of obedience vis-a-vis the objective norm which establishes and conditions the correspondence of its decisions with the commands and prohibitions which are at the basis of human behavior."<sup>106</sup>

61. The truth about moral good, as that truth is declared in the law of reason, is practically and concretely recognized by the judgment of conscience, which leads one to take responsibility for the good or the evil one has done. If man does evil, the just judgment of his conscience remains within him as a witness to the universal truth of the good, as well as to the malice of his particular choice. But the verdict of conscience remains in him also as a pledge of hope and mercy: while bearing witness to the evil he has done, it also reminds him of his need, with the help of God's grace, to ask forgiveness, to do good and to cultivate virtue constantly.

Consequently *in the practical judgment of conscience*, which imposes on the person the obligation to perform a given act, *the link between freedom and truth is made manifest*. Precisely for this reason conscience expresses itself in acts of "judgment" which reflect the truth about the good, and not in arbitrary "decisions." The maturity and responsibility of these judgments--and, when all is said and done, of the individual who is their subject--are not measured by the liberation of the conscience from objective truth, in favor of an alleged autonomy in personal decisions, but, on the contrary, by an insistent search for truth and by allowing oneself to be guided by that truth in one's actions.

#### *Seeking What is True and Good*

62. Conscience, as the judgment of an act, is not exempt from the possibility of error. As the Council puts it, not infrequently conscience can be mistaken as a result of invincible ignorance, although it does not on that account forfeit its dignity; but this cannot be said when a man shows little concern for seeking what is true and good, and conscience gradually becomes almost blind from being accustomed to sin.<sup>107</sup> In these brief words the Council sums up the doctrine which the Church down the centuries has developed with regard to the *erroneous conscience*.

Certainly, in order to have a "good conscience" (1 Tim 1:5), man must seek the truth and must make judgments in accordance with that same truth. As the Apostle Paul says, the conscience must be "confirmed by the Holy Spirit" (cf. Rom 9:1); it must be "clear" (2 Tim 1:3); it must not "practice cunning and tamper with God's word," but "openly state the truth" (cf. 2 Cor 4:2). On the other hand, the Apostle also warns Christians: "Do not be conformed to this world but be



transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

Paul's admonition urges us to be watchful, warning us that in the judgments of our conscience the possibility of error is always present. Conscience is *not an infallible judge*; it can make mistakes. However, error of conscience can be the result of an *invincible ignorance*, an ignorance of which the subject is not aware and which he is unable to overcome by himself.

The Council reminds us that in cases where such invincible ignorance is not culpable, conscience does not lose its dignity, because even when it directs us to act in a way not in conformity with the objective moral order, it continues to speak in the name of that truth about the good which the subject is called to seek sincerely.

63. In any event, it is always from the truth that the dignity of conscience derives. In the case of the correct conscience, it is a question of the *objective truth* received by man; in the case of the erroneous conscience, it is a question of what man, mistakenly, *subjectively* considers to be true. It is never acceptable to confuse a "subjective" error about moral good with the "objective" truth rationally proposed to man in virtue of his end, or to make the moral value of an act performed with a true and correct conscience equivalent to the moral value of an act performed by following the judgment of an erroneous conscience.<sup>108</sup> It is possible that the evil done as the result of invincible ignorance or a non-culpable error of judgment may not be imputable to the agent; but even in this case it does not cease to be an evil, a disorder in relation to the truth about the good. Furthermore, a good act which is not recognized as such does not contribute to the moral growth of the person who performs it; it does not perfect him and it does not help to dispose him for the supreme good. Thus, before feeling easily justified in the name of our conscience, we should reflect on the words of the Psalm: "Who can discern his errors? Clear me from hidden faults" (Ps 19:12). There are faults which we fail to see but which nevertheless remain faults, because we have refused to walk towards the light (cf. Jn 9:39-41).

Conscience, as the ultimate concrete judgment, compromises its dignity when it is *culpably erroneous*, that is to say, "when man shows little concern for seeking what is true and good, and conscience gradually becomes almost blind from being accustomed to sin."<sup>109</sup> Jesus alludes to the danger of the conscience being deformed when he warns: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Mt 6:22-23).

64. The words of Jesus just quoted also represent a call to *form our conscience*, to make it the object of a continuous conversion to what is true and to what is good. In the same vein, Saint Paul exhorts us not to be conformed to the mentality of this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our mind (cf. Rom 12:2). It is the "heart" converted to the Lord and to the love of what is good which is really the source of *true* judgments of conscience. Indeed, in order to "prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2), knowledge of God's law in general is certainly necessary, but it is not sufficient: what is essential is a sort of "*connaturality between man and the true good*."<sup>110</sup> Such a connaturality is rooted in and develops through the virtuous attitudes of the individual himself: prudence and the other cardinal virtues, and even before these the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. This is the meaning of Jesus' saying: "He who does what is true comes to the light" (Jn 3:21).

Christians have a great help for the formation of conscience *in the Church and her Magisterium*. As the Council affirms: "In forming their consciences the Christian faithful must give careful attention to the sacred and certain teaching of the Church. For the Catholic Church is by the will of Christ the teacher of truth. Her charge is to announce and teach authentically that truth which is Christ, and at the same time with her authority to declare and confirm the principles of the moral order which derive from human nature itself."<sup>111</sup> It follows that the authority of the Church, when she pronounces on moral questions, in no way undermines the freedom of conscience of Christians. This is so not only because freedom of conscience is never freedom "from" the truth but always and only freedom "in" the truth, but also because the Magisterium does not bring to the Christian conscience truths which are extraneous to it; rather it brings to light the truths which it ought already to possess, developing them from the starting point of the primordial act of faith. The Church puts herself always and only at the *service of conscience*, helping it to avoid being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit (cf. Eph 4:14), and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of man, but rather, especially in more difficult questions, to attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it.

### III. Fundamental Choice and Specific Kinds of Behavior

*"Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh" (Gal 5:13)*

65. The heightened concern for freedom in our own day has led many students of the behavioral and the theological sciences to develop a more penetrating analysis of its nature and of its dynamics. It has been rightly pointed out that freedom is not only the choice for one or another particular action; it is also, within that choice, a *decision about oneself* and a setting of one's own life for or against the Good, for or against the Truth, and ultimately for or against God. Emphasis has rightly been placed on the importance of certain choices which "shape" a person's entire moral life, and which serve as bounds within which other particular everyday choices can be situated and allowed to develop.

Some authors, however, have proposed an even more radical revision of the *relationship between person and acts*. They speak of a "fundamental freedom," deeper than and different from freedom of choice, which needs to be considered if human actions are to be correctly understood and evaluated. According to these authors, the *key role in the moral life* is to be attributed to a "fundamental option," brought about by that fundamental freedom whereby the person makes an overall self-determination, not through a specific and conscious decision on the level of reflection, but in a "transcendental" and "a thematic" way. *Particular acts* which flow from this option would constitute only partial and never definitive attempts to give it expression; they would only be its "signs" or symptoms. The immediate object of such acts would not be absolute Good (before which the freedom of the person would be expressed on a transcendental level), but particular (also termed "categorical") goods. In the opinion of some theologians, none of these goods, which by their nature are partial, could determine the freedom of man as a person in his totality, even though it is only by bringing them about or refusing to do so that man is able to express his own fundamental option.

A *distinction* thus comes to be introduced *between the fundamental option and deliberate choices of a concrete kind of behavior*. In some authors this division tends to become a *separation*, when they expressly limit moral "good" and "evil" to the transcendental dimension proper to the fundamental option, and describe as "right" or "wrong" the choices of particular

"inner worldly" kinds of behavior: those, in other words, concerning man's relationship with himself, with others and with the material world. There thus appears to be established within human acting a clear disjunction between two levels of morality: on the one hand the order of good and evil, which is dependent on the will, and on the other hand specific kinds of behavior, which are judged to be morally right or wrong only on the basis of a technical calculation of the proportion between the "pre-moral" or "physical" goods and evils which actually result from the action. This is pushed to the point where a concrete kind of behavior, even one freely chosen, comes to be considered as a merely physical process, and not according to the criteria proper to a human act. The conclusion to which this eventually leads is that the properly moral assessment of the person is reserved to his fundamental option, prescinding in whole or in part from his choice of particular actions, of concrete kinds of behavior.

66. There is no doubt that Christian moral teaching, even in its Biblical roots, acknowledges the specific importance of a fundamental choice which qualifies the moral life and engages freedom on a radical level before God. It is a question of the decision of faith, of the *obedience of faith* (cf. Rom 16:26) "by which man makes a total and free self-commitment to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God as he reveals."<sup>112</sup> This faith, which works through love (cf. Gal 5:6), comes from the core of man, from his "heart" (cf. Rom 10:10), whence it is called to bear fruit in works (cf. Mt 12:33-35; Lk 6:43-45; Rom 8:5-10; Gal 5:22). In the Decalogue, one finds, as an introduction to the various commandments, the basic clause: "I am the Lord your God . . ." (Ex 20:2), which, by impressing upon the numerous and varied particular prescriptions their primordial meaning, gives the morality of the Covenant its aspect of completeness, unity and profundity. Israel's fundamental decision, then, is about the fundamental commandment (cf. Jos 24:14-25; Ex 19:3-8; Mic 6:8). The morality of the New Covenant is similarly dominated by the fundamental call of Jesus to follow him--thus he also says to the young man: "If you wish to be perfect . . . then come, follow me" (Mt 19:21); to this call the disciple must respond with a radical decision and choice. The Gospel parables of the treasure and the pearl of great price, for which one sells all one's possessions, are eloquent and effective images of the radical and unconditional nature of the decision demanded by the Kingdom of God. The radical nature of the decision to follow Jesus is admirably expressed in his own words: "Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it" (Mk 8:35).

Jesus' call to "come, follow me" marks the greatest possible exaltation of human freedom, yet at the same time it witnesses to the truth and to the obligation of acts of faith and of decisions which can be described as involving a fundamental option. We find a similar exaltation of human freedom in the words of Saint Paul: "You were called to freedom, brethren" (Gal 5:13). But the Apostle immediately adds a grave warning: "Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh." This warning echoes his earlier words: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1). Paul encourages us to be watchful, because freedom is always threatened by slavery. And this is precisely the case when an act of faith--in the sense of a fundamental option--becomes separated from the choice of particular acts, as in the tendencies mentioned above. These tendencies are therefore contrary to the teaching of Scripture itself, which sees the fundamental option as a genuine choice of freedom and links that choice profoundly to particular acts. By his fundamental choice, man is capable of giving his life direction and of progressing, with the help of grace, towards his end, following God's call. But this capacity is actually exercised in the particular choices of specific actions, through which man deliberately conforms himself to God's will, wisdom and law. It thus needs to be stated that *the so-*

*called fundamental option, to the extent that it is distinct from a generic intention and hence one not yet determined in such a way that freedom is obligated, is always brought into play through conscious and free decisions. Precisely for this reason, it is revoked when man engages his freedom in conscious decisions to the contrary, with regard to morally grave matter.*

To separate the fundamental option from concrete kinds of behavior means to contradict the substantial integrity or personal unity of the moral agent in his body and in his soul. A fundamental option understood without explicit consideration of the potentialities which it puts into effect and the determinations which express it does not do justice to the rational finality immanent in man's acting and in each of his deliberate decisions. In point of fact, the morality of human acts is not deduced only from one's intention, orientation or fundamental option, understood as an intention devoid of a clearly determined binding content or as an intention with no corresponding positive effort to fulfill the different obligations of the moral life. Judgments about morality cannot be made without taking into consideration whether or not the deliberate choice of a specific kind of behavior is in conformity with the dignity and integral vocation of the human person. Every choice always implies a reference by the deliberate will to the goods and evils indicated by the natural law as goods to be pursued and evils to be avoided. In the case of the positive moral precepts, prudence always has the task of verifying that they apply in a specific situation, for example, in view of other duties which may be more important or urgent. But the negative moral precepts, those prohibiting certain concrete actions or kinds of behavior as intrinsically evil, do not allow for any legitimate exception. They do not leave room, in any morally acceptable way, for the "creativity" of any contrary determination whatsoever. Once the moral species of an action prohibited by a universal rule is concretely recognized, the only morally good act is that of obeying the moral law and of refraining from the action which it forbids.

68. Here an important pastoral consideration must be added. According to the logic of the positions mentioned above, an individual could, by virtue of a fundamental option, remain faithful to God independently of whether or not certain of his choices and his acts are in conformity with specific moral norms or rules. By virtue of a primordial option for charity, that individual could continue to be morally good, persevere in God's grace and attain salvation, even if certain of his specific kinds of behavior were deliberately and gravely contrary to God's commandments as set forth by the Church.

In point of fact, man does not suffer perdition only by being unfaithful to that fundamental option whereby he has made "a free self-commitment to God."<sup>113</sup> With every freely committed mortal sin, he offends God as the giver of the law and as a result becomes guilty with regard to the entire law (cf. Jan 2:8-11); even if he perseveres in faith, he loses "sanctifying grace," "charity" and "eternal happiness."<sup>114</sup> As the Council of Trent teaches, "the grace of justification once received is lost not only by apostasy, by which faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin."<sup>115</sup>

### *Mortal and Venial Sin*

69. As we have just seen, reflection on the fundamental option has also led some theologians to undertake a basic revision of the traditional distinction between *mortal* sins and *venial* sins. They insist that the opposition to God's law which causes the loss of sanctifying grace--and eternal damnation, when one dies in such a state of sin--could only be the result of an act which engages the person in his totality: in other words, an act of fundamental option. According to these

theologians, mortal sin, which separates man from God, only exists in the rejection of God, carried out at a level of freedom which is neither to be identified with an act of choice nor capable of becoming the object of conscious awareness. Consequently, they go on to say, it is difficult, at least psychologically, to accept the fact that a Christian, who wishes to remain united to Jesus Christ and to his Church, could so easily and repeatedly commit mortal sins, as the "matter" itself of his actions would sometimes indicate. Likewise, it would be hard to accept that man is able, in a brief lapse of time, to sever radically the bond of communion with God and afterwards be converted to him by sincere repentance. The gravity of sin, they maintain, ought to be measured by the degree of engagement of the freedom of the person performing an act, rather than by the matter of that act.

70. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* reaffirmed the importance and permanent validity of the distinction between mortal and venial sins, in accordance with the Church's tradition. And the 1983 Synod of Bishops, from which that Exhortation emerged, "not only reaffirmed the teaching of the Council of Trent concerning the existence and nature of mortal and venial sins, but it also recalled that mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent."<sup>116</sup>

The statement of the Council of Trent does not only consider the "grave matter" of mortal sin; it also recalls that its necessary condition is "full awareness and deliberate consent." In any event, both in moral theology and in pastoral practice one is familiar with cases in which an act which is grave by reason of its matter does not constitute a mortal sin because of a lack of full awareness or deliberate consent on the part of the person performing it. Even so, "care will have to be taken not to reduce mortal sin to an act of *'fundamental option'*--as is commonly said today--against God," seen either as an explicit and formal rejection of God and neighbor or as an implicit and unconscious rejection of love.

For mortal sin exists also when a person knowingly and willingly, for whatever reason, chooses something gravely disordered. In fact, such a choice already includes contempt for the divine law, a rejection of God's love for humanity and the whole of creation: the person turns away from God and loses charity. Consequently, *the fundamental orientation can be radically changed by particular acts*. Clearly, situations can occur which are very complex and obscure from a psychological viewpoint, and which influence the sinner's subjective immutability. But from a consideration of the psychological sphere one cannot proceed to create a theological category, which is precisely what the *'fundamental option'* is, understanding it in such a way that it objectively changes or casts doubt upon the traditional concept of mortal sin.<sup>117</sup>

The separation of fundamental option from deliberate choices of particular kinds of behavior, disordered in themselves or in their circumstances, which would not engage that option, thus involves a denial of Catholic doctrine on *mortal sin*:

With the whole tradition of the Church, we call mortal sin the act by which man freely and consciously rejects God, his law, the covenant of love that God offers, preferring to turn in on himself or to some created and finite reality, something contrary to the divine will (*conversio ad creaturam*). This can occur in a direct and formal way, in the sins of idolatry, apostasy and atheism; or in an equivalent way, as in every act of disobedience to God's commandments in a grave matter.<sup>118</sup>

#### IV. The Moral Act

##### *Teleology and Teleologism*

71. The relationship between man's freedom and God's law, which has its intimate and living center in the moral conscience, is manifested and realized in human acts. It is precisely through his acts that man attains perfection as man, as one who is called to seek his Creator of his own accord and freely to arrive at full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him.<sup>119</sup>

Human acts are moral acts because they express and determine the goodness or evil of the individual who performs them.<sup>120</sup> They do not produce a change merely in the state of affairs outside of man but, to the extent that they are deliberate choices, they give moral definition to the very person who performs them, determining his *profound spiritual traits*. This was perceptively noted by Saint Gregory of Nyssa:

All things subject to change and to becoming never remain constant, but continually pass from one state to another, for better or worse. . . . Now, human life is always subject to change; it needs to be born ever anew . . . but here birth does not come about by a foreign intervention, as is the case with bodily beings . . . ; it is the result of a free choice. Thus *we are* in a certain way our own parents, creating ourselves as we will, by our decisions."<sup>121</sup>

72. The *morality of acts* is defined by the relationship of man's freedom with the authentic good. This good is established, as the eternal law, by Divine Wisdom which orders every being towards its end: this eternal law is known both by man's natural reason (hence it is "natural law"), and--in an integral and perfect way--by God's supernatural Revelation (hence it is called "divine law"). Acting is morally good when the choices of freedom are *in conformity with man's true good* and thus express the voluntary ordering of the person towards his ultimate end: God himself, the supreme good in whom man finds his full and perfect happiness. The first question in the young man's conversation with Jesus: "What good must I do to have eternal life?" (Mt 19:6) immediately brings out *the essential connection between the moral value of an act and man's final end*. Jesus, in his reply, confirms the young man's conviction: the performance of good acts, commanded by the One who "alone is good," constitutes the indispensable condition of and path to eternal blessedness: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17). Jesus' answer and his reference to the commandments also make it clear that the path to that end is marked by respect for the divine laws which safeguard human good. *Only the act in conformity with the good can be a path that leads to life*.

The rational ordering of the human act to the good in its truth and the voluntary pursuit of that good, known by reason, constitute morality. Hence human activity cannot be judged as morally good merely because it is a means for attaining one or another of its goals, or simply because the subject's intention is good.<sup>122</sup> Activity is morally good when it attests to and expresses the voluntary ordering of the person to his ultimate end and the conformity of a concrete action with the human good as it is acknowledged in its truth by reason. If the object of the concrete action is not in harmony with the true good of the person, the choice of that action makes our will and ourselves morally evil, thus putting us in conflict with our ultimate end, the supreme good, God himself.

73. The Christian, thanks to God's Revelation and to faith, is aware of the "newness" which characterizes the morality of his actions: these actions are called to show either consistency or

inconsistency with that dignity and vocation which have been bestowed on him by grace. In Jesus Christ and in his Spirit, the Christian is a "new creation," a child of God; by his actions he shows his likeness or unlikeness to the image of the Son who is the first-born among many brethren (cf. Rom 8:29), he lives out his fidelity or infidelity to the gift of the Spirit, and he opens or closes himself to eternal life, to the communion of vision, love and happiness with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>123</sup> As Saint Cyril of Alexandria writes, Christ "forms us according to his image, in such a way that the traits of his divine nature shine forth in us through sanctification and justice and the life which is good and in conformity with virtue. . . . The beauty of this image shines forth in us who are in Christ, when we show ourselves to be good in our works."<sup>124</sup>

Consequently the moral life has an essential "*teleological*" character, since it consists in the deliberate ordering of human acts to God, the supreme good and ultimate end (*telos*) of man. This is attested to once more by the question posed by the young man to Jesus: "What good must I do to have eternal life?" But this ordering to one's ultimate end is not something subjective, dependent solely upon one's intention. It presupposes that such acts are in themselves capable of being ordered to this end, insofar as they are in conformity with the authentic moral good of man, safeguarded by the commandments. This is what Jesus himself points out in his reply to the young man: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17).

Clearly such an ordering must be rational and free, conscious and deliberate, by virtue of which man is "responsible" for his actions and subject to the judgment of God, the just and good judge who, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, rewards good and punishes evil: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10).

74. But on what does the moral assessment of man's free acts depend? What is it that ensures this *ordering of human acts to God*? Is it the *intention* of the acting subject, the *circumstances--* and in particular the consequences--of his action, or the *object* itself of his act?

This is what is traditionally called the problem of the "sources of morality." Precisely with regard to this problem there have emerged in the last few decades new or newly revived theological and cultural trends which call for careful discernment on the part of the Church's Magisterium.

Certain *ethical theories*, called "*teleological*," claim to be concerned for the conformity of human acts with the ends pursued by the agent and with the values intended by him. The criteria for evaluating the moral rightness of an action are drawn from the *weighing of the non-moral or pre-moral goods* to be gained and the corresponding non-moral or pre-moral values to be respected. For some, concrete behavior would be right or wrong according as whether or not it is capable of producing a better state of affairs for all concerned. Right conduct would be the one capable of "maximizing" goods and "minimizing" evils.

Many of the Catholic moralists who follow in this direction seek to distance themselves from utilitarianism and pragmatism, where the morality of human acts would be judged without any reference to the man's true ultimate end. They rightly recognize the need to find ever more consistent rational arguments in order to justify the requirements and to provide a foundation for the norms of the moral life. This kind of investigation is legitimate and necessary, since the moral order, as established by the natural law, is in principle accessible to human reason. Furthermore, such investigation is well-suited to meeting the demands of dialogue and cooperation with non-Catholics and non-believers, especially in pluralistic societies.

75. But as part of the effort to work out such a rational morality (for this reason it is sometimes called an "autonomous morality") there exist *false solutions, linked in particular to an inadequate understanding of the object of moral action*. Some authors do not take into sufficient consideration the fact that the will is involved in the concrete choices which it makes: these choices are a condition of its moral goodness and its being ordered to the ultimate end of the person. Others are inspired by a notion of freedom which prescind from the actual conditions of its exercise, from its objective reference to the truth about the good, and from its determination through choices of concrete kinds of behavior. According to these theories, free will would neither be morally subjected to specific obligations nor shaped by its choices, while nonetheless still remaining responsible for its own acts and for their consequences. This "*teleologism*," as a method for discovering the moral norm, can thus be called--according to terminology and approaches imported from different currents of thought--"*consequentialism*" or "*proportionalism*." The former claims to draw the criteria of the rightness of a given way of acting solely from a calculation of foreseeable consequences deriving from a given choice. The latter, by weighing the various values and goods being sought, focuses rather on the proportion acknowledged between the good and bad effects of that choice, with a view to the "greater good" or "lesser evil" actually possible in a particular situation.

*The teleological ethical theories (proportionalism, consequentialism)*, while acknowledging that moral values are indicated by reason and by Revelation, maintain that it is never possible to formulate an absolute prohibition of particular kinds of behavior which would be in conflict, in every circumstance and in every culture, with those values. The acting subject would indeed be responsible for attaining the values pursued, but in two ways: the values or goods involved in a human act would be, from one viewpoint, of *the moral order* (in relation to properly moral values, such as love of God and neighbor, justice, etc.) and, from another viewpoint, of *the premoral order*, which some term non-moral, physical or ontic (in relation to the advantages and disadvantages accruing both to the agent and to all other persons possibly involved, such as, for example, health or its endangerment, physical integrity, life, death, loss of material goods, etc.). In a world where goodness is always mixed with evil, and every good effect linked to other evil effects, the morality of an act would be judged in two different ways: its moral "goodness" would be judged on the basis of the subject's intention in reference to moral goods, and its "rightness" on the basis of a consideration of its foreseeable effects or consequences and of their proportion. Consequently, concrete kinds of behavior could be described as "right" or "wrong," without it being thereby possible to judge as morally "good" or "bad" the will of the person choosing them. In this way, an act which, by contradicting a universal negative norm, directly violates goods considered as "pre-moral" could be qualified as morally acceptable if the intention of the subject is focused, in accordance with a "responsible" assessment of the goods involved in the concrete action, on the moral value judged to be decisive in the situation.

The evaluation of the consequences of the action, based on the proportion between the act and its effects and between the effects themselves, would regard only the pre-moral order. The moral specificity of acts, that is their goodness or evil, would be determined exclusively by the faithfulness of the person to the highest values of charity and prudence, without this faithfulness necessarily being incompatible with choices contrary to certain particular moral precepts. Even when grave matter is concerned, these precepts should be considered as operative norms which are always relative and open to exceptions.

In this view, deliberate consent to certain kinds of behavior declared illicit by traditional moral theology would not imply an objective moral evil.



## *The Object of the Deliberate Act*

76. These theories can gain a certain persuasive force from their affinity to the scientific mentality, which is rightly concerned with ordering technical and economic activities on the basis of a calculation of resources and profits, procedures and their effects. They seek to provide liberation from the constraints of a voluntaristic and arbitrary morality of obligation which would ultimately be dehumanizing.

Such theories however are not faithful to the Church's teaching, when they believe they can justify, as morally good, deliberate choices of kinds of behavior contrary to the commandments of the divine and natural law. These theories cannot claim to be grounded in the Catholic moral tradition. Although the latter did witness the development of a casuistry which tried to assess the best ways to achieve the good in certain concrete situations, it is nonetheless true that this casuistry concerned only cases in which the law was uncertain, and thus the absolute validity of negative moral precepts, which oblige without exception, was not called into question. The faithful are obliged to acknowledge and respect the specific moral precepts declared and taught by the Church in the name of God, the Creator and Lord.<sup>125</sup> When the Apostle Paul sums up the fulfillment of the law in the precept of love of neighbor as oneself (cf. Rom 13:8-10), he is not weakening the commandments but reinforcing them, since he is revealing their requirements and their gravity. *Love of God and of one's neighbor cannot be separated from the observance of the Commandments of the Covenant* renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit. It is an honor characteristic of Christians to obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29) and to accept even martyrdom as a consequence, like the holy men and women of the Old and New Testaments, who are considered such because they gave their lives rather than perform this or that particular act contrary to faith or virtue.

77. In order to offer rational criteria for a right moral decision, the theories mentioned above take account of the intention and *consequences* of human action. Certainly there is need to take into account both the intention--as Jesus forcefully insisted in clear disagreement with the scribes and Pharisees, who prescribed in great detail certain outward practices without paying attention to the heart (cf. Mk 7:20-21; Mt 15:19)--and the goods obtained and the evils avoided as a result of a particular act. Responsibility demands as much. But the consideration of these consequences, and also of intentions, is not sufficient for judging the moral quality of a concrete choice. The weighing of the goods and evils foreseeable as the consequence of an action is not an adequate method for determining whether the choice of that concrete kind of behavior is "according to its species," or "in itself," morally good or bad, licit or illicit. The foreseeable consequences are part of those circumstances of the act, which, while capable of lessening the gravity of an evil act, nonetheless cannot alter its moral species.

Moreover, everyone recognizes the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of evaluating all the good and evil consequences and effects--defined as pre-moral--of one's own acts: an exhaustive rational calculation is not possible. How then can one go about establishing proportions which depend on a measuring, the criteria of which remain obscure? How could an absolute obligation be justified on the basis of such debatable calculations?

78. *The morality of the human act depends primarily and fundamentally on the "object" rationally chosen by the deliberate will*, as is borne out by the insightful analysis, still valid today, made by Saint Thomas.<sup>126</sup> In order to be able to grasp the object of an act which specifies that act

morally, it is therefore necessary to place oneself *in the perspective of the acting person*. The object of the act of willing is in fact a freely chosen kind of behavior. To the extent that it is in conformity with the order of reason, it is the cause of the goodness of the will; it perfects us morally, and disposes us to recognize our ultimate end in the perfect good, primordial love. By the object of a given moral act, then, one cannot mean a process or an event of the merely physical order, to be assessed on the basis of its ability to bring about a given state of affairs in the outside world. Rather, that object is the proximate end of a deliberate decision which determines the act of willing on the part of the acting person. Consequently, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, "there are certain specific kinds of behavior that are always wrong to choose, because choosing them involves a disorder of the will, that is, a moral evil."<sup>127</sup> And Saint Thomas observes that "it often happens that man acts with a good intention, but without spiritual gain, because he lacks a good will. Let us say that someone robs in order to feed the poor: in this case, even though the intention is good, the uprightness of the will is lacking. Consequently, no evil done with a good intention can be excused. `There are those who say: And why not do evil that good may come? Their condemnation is just' (Rom 3:8)."<sup>128</sup>

The reason why a good intention is not itself sufficient, but a correct choice of actions is also needed, is that the human act depends on its object, whether that object is *capable or not of being ordered* to God, to the One who "alone is good," and thus brings about the perfection of the person. An act is therefore good if its object is in conformity with the good of the person with respect for the goods morally relevant for him. Christian ethics, which pays particular attention to the moral object, does not refuse to consider the inner "teleology" of acting, inasmuch as it is directed to promoting the true good of the person; but it recognizes that it is really pursued only when the essential elements of human nature are respected. The human act, good according to its object, is also *capable of being ordered* to its ultimate end. That same act then attains its ultimate and decisive perfection when the will *actually does order* it to God through charity. As the Patron of moral theologians and confessors teaches: "It is not enough to do good works; they need to be done well. For our works to be good and perfect, they must be done for the sole purpose of pleasing God."<sup>129</sup>

*"Intrinsic Evil ": It Is Not Licit To Do Evil that Good May Come of It (cf Rom 3:8)*

79. One must therefore reject the thesis, characteristic of teleological and proportionalist theories, *which holds that it is impossible to qualify as morally evil according to its species--its "object"--the deliberate choice of certain kinds of behavior or specific acts, apart from a consideration of the intention for which the choice is made or the totality of the foreseeable consequences of that act for all persons concerned.*

The primary and decisive element for moral judgment is the object of the human act, which establishes whether it is *capable of being ordered to the good and to the ultimate end, which is God*. This capability is grasped by reason in the very being of man, considered in his integral truth, and therefore in his natural inclinations, his motivations and his finalities, which always have a spiritual dimension as well. It is precisely these which are the contents of the natural law and hence that ordered complex of "personal goods" which serve the "good of the person": the good which is the person himself and his perfection. These are the goods safeguarded by the commandments, which, according to Saint Thomas, contain the whole natural law.<sup>130</sup>

80. Reason attests that there are objects of the human act which are by their nature "incapable of being ordered" to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in his image. These are the acts which, in the Church's moral tradition, have been termed "intrinsically

evil" (*intrinsece malum*): they are such *always and per se*, in other words, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances. Consequently, without in the least denying the influence on morality exercised by circumstances and especially by intentions, the Church teaches that "there exist acts which *per se* and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object."<sup>131</sup> The Second Vatican Council itself, in discussing the respect due to the human person, gives a number of examples of such acts: "Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat laborers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace, and so long as they infect human civilization they contaminate those who inflict them more than those who suffer injustice, and they are a negation of the honor due to the Creator."<sup>132</sup>

With regard to intrinsically evil acts, and in reference to contraceptive practices whereby the conjugal act is intentionally rendered infertile, Pope Paul VI teaches: "Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good, it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it (cf. Rom 3:8)--in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general."<sup>133</sup>

81. In teaching the existence of intrinsically evil acts, the Church accepts the teaching of Sacred Scripture. The Apostle Paul emphatically states: "Do not be deceived: neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9-10).

If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain "irremediably" evil acts; *per se* and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person. "As for acts which are themselves sins (*cum iam opera ipsa peccata sunt*)," Saint Augustine writes, "like theft, fornication, blasphemy, who would dare affirm that, by doing them for good motives (*causis bonis*), they would no longer be sins, or, what is even more absurd, that they would be sins that are justified?"<sup>134</sup>

Consequently, circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act "subjectively" good or defensible as a choice.

82. Furthermore, an intention is good when it has as its aim the true good of the person in view of his ultimate end. But acts whose object is "not capable of being ordered" to God and "unworthy of the human person" are always and in every case in conflict with that good. Consequently, respect for norms which prohibit such acts and oblige *semper et pro semper*, that is, without any exception, not only does not inhibit a good intention, but actually represents its basic expression.

The doctrine of the object as a source of morality represents an authentic explicitation of the Biblical morality of the Covenant and of the commandments, of charity and of the virtues. The

moral quality of human acting is dependent on this fidelity to the commandments, as an expression of obedience and of love. For this reason--we repeat--the opinion must be rejected as erroneous which maintains that it is impossible to qualify as morally evil according to its species the deliberate choice of certain kinds of behavior or specific acts, without taking into account the intention for which the choice was made or the totality of the foreseeable consequences of that act for all persons concerned. Without the *rational determination of the morality of human acting* as stated above, it would be impossible to affirm the existence of an "objective moral order"<sup>135</sup> and to establish any particular norm the content of which would be binding without exception. This would be to the detriment of human fraternity and the truth about the good, and would be injurious to ecclesial communion as well.

83. As is evident, in the question of the morality of human acts, and in particular the question of whether there exist intrinsically evil acts, we find ourselves faced with *the question of man himself*, of his *truth* and of the moral consequences flowing from that truth. By acknowledging and teaching the existence of intrinsic evil in given human acts, the Church remains faithful to the integral truth about man; she thus respects and promotes man in his dignity and vocation. Consequently, she must reject the theories set forth above, which contradict this truth.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, we must not be content merely to warn the faithful about the errors and dangers of certain ethical theories. We must first of all show the inviting splendor of that truth which is Jesus Christ himself. In him, who is the Truth (cf. Jn 14:6), man can understand fully and live perfectly, through his good actions, his vocation to freedom in obedience to the divine law summarized in the commandment of love of God and neighbor. And this is what takes place through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of freedom and of love: in him we are enabled to interiorize the law, to receive it and to live it as the motivating force of true personal freedom: "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jas 1:25).

### CHAPTER III. MORAL GOOD FOR THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE WORLD

*"Lest the Cross of Christ Be Emptied of Its Power" (1 Cor 1:17)*

*"For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1)*

84. The fundamental question which the moral theories mentioned above pose in a particularly forceful way is that of the relationship of man's freedom to God's law; it is ultimately the question of the *relationship between freedom and truth*.

According to Christian faith and the Church's teaching, "only the freedom which submits to the Truth leads the human person to his true good. The good of the person is to be in the Truth and to *do the Truth*."<sup>136</sup>

A comparison between the Church's teaching and today's social and cultural situation immediately makes clear the urgent need for *the Church herself to develop an intense pastoral effort precisely with regard to this fundamental question*.

This essential bond between Truth, the Good and Freedom has been largely lost sight of by present-day culture. As a result, helping man to rediscover it represents nowadays one of the specific requirements of the Church's mission, for the Salvation of the world. Pilate's question: "What is truth" reflects the distressing perplexity of a man who often no longer knows *who he is*, *whence* he comes and *where* he is going. Hence we not infrequently witness the fearful plunging of the human person into situations of gradual self-destruction. According to some, it appears that

one no longer need acknowledge the enduring absoluteness of any moral value. All around us we encounter contempt for human life after conception and before birth; the ongoing violation of basic rights of the person; the unjust destruction of goods minimally necessary for a human life. Indeed, something more serious has happened: man is no longer convinced that only in the truth can he find salvation. The saving power of the truth is contested, and freedom alone, uprooted from any objectivity, is left to decide by itself what is good and what is evil. This relativism becomes, in the field of theology, a lack of trust in the wisdom of God, who guides man with the moral law. Concrete situations are unfavorably contrasted with the precepts of the moral law, nor is it any longer maintained that, when all is said and done, the law of God is always the one true good of man.<sup>137</sup>

85. The discernment which the Church carries out with regard to these ethical theories is not simply limited to denouncing and refuting them. In a positive way, the Church seeks, with great love, to help all the faithful to form a moral conscience which will make judgments and lead to decisions in accordance with the truth, following the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2). This effort by the Church finds its support--the "secret" of its educative power--not so much in doctrinal statements and pastoral appeals to vigilance, as in *constantly looking to the Lord Jesus*. Each day the Church looks to Christ with unflinching love, fully aware that the true and final answer to the problem of morality lies in him alone. In a particular way, it is *in the Crucified Christ* that *the Church finds the answer* to the question troubling so many people today: how can obedience to universal and unchanging moral norms respect the uniqueness and individuality of the person, and not represent a threat to his freedom and dignity? The Church makes her own the Apostle Paul's awareness of the mission he had received: "Christ . . . sent me . . . to preach the Gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. . . . We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:17, 23-24). *The Crucified Christ reveals the authentic meaning of freedom; he lives it fully in the total gift of himself* and calls his disciples to share in his freedom.

86. Rational reflection and daily experience demonstrate the weakness which marks man's freedom. That freedom is real but limited: its absolute and unconditional origin is not in itself, but in the life within which it is situated and which represents for it, at one and the same time, both a limitation and a possibility. Human freedom belongs to us as creatures; it is a freedom which is given as a gift, one to be received like a seed and to be cultivated responsibly. It is an essential part of that creaturely image which is the basis of the dignity of the person. Within that freedom there is an echo of the primordial vocation whereby the Creator calls man to the true Good, and even more, through Christ's Revelation, to become his friend and to share his own divine life. It is at once inalienable self possession and openness to all that exists, in passing beyond self to knowledge and love of the other.<sup>138</sup> Freedom then is rooted in the truth about man, and it is ultimately directed towards communion.

Reason and experience not only confirm the weakness of human freedom, they also confirm its tragic aspects. Man comes to realize that his freedom is in some mysterious way inclined to betray this openness to the True and the Good, and that all too often he actually prefers to choose finite, limited and ephemeral goods. What is more, within his errors and negative decisions, man

glimpses the source of a deep rebellion, which leads him to reject the Truth and the Good in order to set himself up as an absolute principle unto himself: "You will be like God" (Gen 3:5). Consequently, *freedom itself needs to be set free*. It is Christ who sets it free: he "has set us free for freedom" (cf. Gal 5:1).

87. Christ reveals, first and foremost, that the frank and open acceptance of truth is the condition for authentic freedom: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32).<sup>139</sup> This is truth which sets one free in the face of worldly power and which gives the strength to endure martyrdom. So it was with Jesus before Pilate: "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (Jn 18:37). The true worshipers of God must thus worship him "in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23): *in this worship they become free*. Worship of God and a relationship with truth are revealed in Jesus Christ as the deepest foundation of freedom.

Furthermore, Jesus reveals by his whole life, and not only by his words, that freedom is acquired in *love*, that is, in the *gift of self*. The one who says: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13), freely goes out to meet his Passion (cf. Mt 26:46), and in obedience to the Father gives his life on the Cross for all men (cf. Phil 2:6-11). Contemplation of Jesus Crucified is thus the highroad which the Church must tread every day if she wishes to understand the full meaning of freedom: the gift of self in *service to God and one's brethren*. Communion with the Crucified and Risen Lord is the never-ending source from which the Church draws unceasingly in order to live in freedom, to give of herself and to serve. Commenting on the verse in Psalm 100, "Serve the Lord with gladness," Saint Augustine says:

In the house of the Lord, slavery is free. It is free because it serves not out of necessity, but out of charity. . . . Charity should make you a servant, just as truth has made you free . . . you are at once both a servant and free: a servant, because you have become such; free, because you are loved by God your Creator; indeed, you have also been enabled to love your Creator. . . . You are a servant of the Lord and you are a freedman of the Lord. Do not go looking for a liberation which will lead you far from the house of your liberator!<sup>140</sup>

The Church, and each of her members, is thus called to share in the *munus regale* of the Crucified Christ (cf. Jn 12:32), to share in the grace and in the responsibility of the Son of man who came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28).<sup>141</sup>

Jesus, then, is the living, personal summation of perfect freedom in total obedience to the will of God. His crucified flesh fully reveals the unbreakable bond between freedom and truth, just as his Resurrection from the dead is the supreme exaltation of the fruitfulness and saving power of a freedom lived out in truth.

*Walking in the Light (cf. I Jn 1:7).*

88. The attempt to set freedom in opposition to truth, and indeed to separate them radically, is the consequence, manifestation and consummation of *another more serious and destructive dichotomy, that which separates faith from morality*.

This separation represents one of the most acute pastoral concerns of the Church amid today's growing secularism, wherein many, indeed too many, people think and live "as if God did not exist." We are speaking of a mentality which affects, often in a profound, extensive and all-embracing way, even the attitudes and behavior of Christians, whose faith is weakened and loses its character as a new and original criterion for thinking and acting in personal, family and social

life. In a widely dechristianized culture, the criteria employed by believers themselves in making judgments and decisions often appear extraneous or even contrary to those of the Gospel.

It is urgent then that Christians should rediscover *the newness of the faith and its power to judge* a prevalent and all intrusive culture. As the Apostle Paul admonishes us: "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light (for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. . . . Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:8-11,15-16; cf. 1 Th 5:4-8).

It is urgent to rediscover and to set forth once more the authentic reality of the Christian faith, which is not simply a set of propositions to be accepted with intellectual assent. Rather, faith is a lived knowledge of Christ, a living remembrance of his commandments, and a *truth to be lived out*. A word, in any event, is not truly received until it passes into action, until it is put into practice. Faith is a decision involving one's whole existence. It is an encounter, a dialogue, a communion of love and of life between the believer and Jesus Christ, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (cf. Jn 14:6). It entails an act of trusting abandonment to Christ, which enables us to live as he lived (cf. Gal 2:20), in profound love of God and of our brothers and sisters.

89. Faith also possesses a moral content. It gives rise to and calls for a consistent life commitment; it entails and brings to perfection the acceptance and observance of God's commandments. As Saint John writes, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth. . . . And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says 'I know him' but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 Jn 1:5-6; 2:3-6).

Through the moral life, faith becomes "confession," not only before God but also before men: it becomes witness. "You are the light of the world," said Jesus;

a city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Mt 5:14-16).

These works are above all those of charity (cf. Mt 25:31-46) and of the authentic freedom which is manifested and lived in the gift of self, *even to the total gift of self*, like that of Jesus, who on the Cross "loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). Christ's witness is the source, model and means for the witness of his disciples, who are called to walk on the same road: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). Charity, in conformity with the radical demands of the Gospel, can lead the believer to the supreme witness of *martyrdom*. Once again this means imitating Jesus who died on the Cross: "Be imitators of God, as beloved children," Paul writes to the Christians of Ephesus, "and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:1-2).

### *Martyrdom, the Exaltation of the Inviolable Holiness of God's Law*

90. The relationship between faith and morality shines forth with all its brilliance in the *unconditional respect due to the insistent demands of the personal dignity of every*

*man*, demands protected by those moral norms which prohibit without exception actions which are intrinsically evil. The universality and the immutability of the moral norm make manifest and at the same time serve to protect the personal dignity and inviolability of man, on whose face is reflected the splendor of God (cf. Gen 9:5-6).

The unacceptability of "teleological," "consequentialist" and "proportionalist" ethical theories, which deny the existence of negative moral norms regarding specific kinds of behavior, norms which are valid without exception, is confirmed in a particularly eloquent way by Christian martyrdom, which has always accompanied and continues to accompany the life of the Church even today.

91. In the Old Testament we already find admirable witnesses of fidelity to the holy law of God even to the point of a voluntary acceptance of death. A prime example is the story of Susanna: in reply to the two unjust judges who threatened to have her condemned to death if she refused to yield to their sinful passion, she says: "I am hemmed in on every side. For if I do this thing, it is death for me; and if I do not, I shall not escape your hands. I choose not to do it and to fall into your hands, rather than to sin in the sight of the Lord!" (Dan 13:22-23). Susanne, preferring to "fall innocent" into the hands of the judges, bears witness not only to her faith and trust in God but also to her obedience to the truth and to the absoluteness of the moral order. By her readiness to die a martyr, she proclaims that it is not right to do what God's law qualifies as evil in order to draw some good from it. Susanne chose for herself the "better part": hers was a perfectly clear witness, without any compromise, to the truth about the good and to the God of Israel. By her acts, she revealed the holiness of God.

At the dawn of the New Testament, *John the Baptist*, unable to refrain from speaking of the law of the Lord and rejecting any compromise with evil, "gave his life in witness to truth and justice,"<sup>142</sup> and thus also became the forerunner of the Messiah in the way he died (cf. Mk 6:17-29). "The one who came to bear witness to the light and who deserved to be called by that same light, which is Christ, a burning and shining lamp, was cast into the darkness of prison. . . . The one to whom it was granted to baptize the Redeemer of the world was thus baptized in his own blood."<sup>143</sup> In the New Testament we find many examples of *followers of Christ*, beginning with the deacon Stephen (cf. Acts 6:8-7:60) and the Apostle James (cf. Acts 12:1-2), who died as martyrs in order to profess their faith and their love for Christ, unwilling to deny him. In this they followed the Lord Jesus who "made the good confession" (1 Tim 6:13) before Caiaphas and Pilate, confirming the truth of his message at the cost of his life. Countless other martyrs accepted persecution and death rather than perform the idolatrous act of burning incense before the statue of the Emperor (cf. Rev 13:7-10). They even refused to feign such worship, thereby giving an example of the duty to refrain from performing even a single concrete act contrary to God's love and the witness of faith. Like Christ himself, they obediently trusted and handed over their lives to the Father, the one who could free them from death (cf. Heb 5:7).

The Church proposes the example of numerous Saints who bore witness to and defended moral truth even to the point of enduring martyrdom, or who preferred death to a single mortal sin. In raising them to the honor of the altars, the Church has canonized their witness and declared the truth of their judgment, according to which the love of God entails the obligation to respect his commandments, even in the most dire of circumstances, and the refusal to betray those commandments, even for the sake of saving one's own life.



92. Martyrdom, accepted as an affirmation of the inviolability of the moral order, bears splendid witness both to the holiness of God's law and to the inviolability of the personal dignity of man, created in God's image and likeness. This dignity may never be disparaged or called into question, even with good intentions, whatever the difficulties involved. Jesus warns us most sternly: "What does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mt 8:36).

Martyrdom rejects as false and illusory whatever "human meaning" one might claim to attribute, even in "exceptional" conditions, to an act morally evil in itself. Indeed, it even more clearly unmasks the true face of such an act: *it is a violation of man's "humanity,"* in the one perpetrating it even before the one enduring it.<sup>144</sup> Hence martyrdom is also the exaltation of a person's perfect "humanity" and of true "life," as is attested by Saint Ignatius of Antioch, addressing the Christians of Rome, the place of his own martyrdom: "Have mercy on me, brethren: do not hold me back from living; do not wish that I die. . . . Let me arrive at the pure light; once there I will be truly a man. Let me imitate the passion of my God."<sup>145</sup>

93. Finally, martyrdom is an *outstanding sign of the holiness of the Church*. Fidelity to God's holy law, witnessed to by death, is a solemn proclamation and missionary commitment *usque ad sanguinem*, so that the splendor of moral truth may be undimmed in the behavior and thinking of individuals and society. This witness makes an extraordinarily valuable contribution to warding off, in civil society and within the ecclesial communities themselves, a headlong plunge into the most dangerous crisis which can afflict man: the *confusion between good and evil*, which makes it impossible to build up and to preserve the moral order of individuals and communities. By their eloquent and attractive example of a life completely transfigured by the splendor of moral truth, the martyrs and, in general, all the Church's Saints, light up every period of history by reawakening its moral sense. By witnessing fully to the good, they are a living reproof to those who transgress the law (cf. Wis 2:12), and they make the words of the Prophet echo ever afresh: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Is 5:20).

Although martyrdom represents the high point of the witness to moral truth, and one to which relatively few people are called, there is nonetheless a consistent witness which all Christians must daily be ready to make, even at the cost of suffering and grave sacrifice. Indeed, faced with the many difficulties which fidelity to the moral order can demand, even in the most ordinary circumstances, the Christian is called, with the grace of God invoked in prayer, to a sometimes heroic commitment. In this he or she is sustained by the virtue of fortitude, whereby--as Gregory the Great teaches--one can actually "love the difficulties of this world for the sake of eternal rewards."<sup>146</sup>

94. In this witness to the absoluteness of the moral good *Christians are not alone*: they are supported by the moral sense present in peoples and by the great religious and sapiential traditions of East and West, from which the interior and mysterious workings of God's Spirit are not absent. The words of the Latin poet Juvenal apply to all: "Consider it the greatest of crimes to prefer survival to honor and, out of love of physical life, to lose the very reason for living."<sup>147</sup> The voice of conscience has always clearly recalled that there are truths and moral values for which one must be prepared to give up one's life. In an individual's words and above all in the sacrifice of his life for a moral value, the Church sees a single testimony to that truth which, already present in creation, shines forth in its fullness on the face of Christ. As Saint Justin put it, "the Stoics, at least

in their teachings on ethics, demonstrated wisdom, thanks to the seed of the Word present in all peoples, and we know that those who followed their doctrines met with hatred and were killed."<sup>148</sup>

*Universal and Unchanging Moral Norms at the Service of the Person and of Society*

95. The Church's teaching, and in particular her firmness in defending the universal and permanent validity of the precepts prohibiting intrinsically evil acts, is not infrequently seen as the sign of an intolerable intransigence, particularly with regard to the enormously complex and conflict-filled situations present in the moral life of individuals and of society today; this intransigence is said to be in contrast with the Church's motherhood. The Church, one hears, is lacking in understanding and compassion. But the Church's motherhood can never in fact be separated from her teaching mission, which she must always carry out as the faithful Bride of Christ, who is the Truth in person. "As Teacher, she never tires of proclaiming the moral norm. . . . The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm. In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection."<sup>149</sup>

In fact, genuine understanding and compassion must mean love for the person, for his true good, for his authentic freedom. And this does not result, certainly, from concealing or weakening moral truth, but rather from proposing it in its most profound meaning as an outpouring of God's eternal Wisdom, which we have received in Christ, and as a service to man, to the growth of his freedom and to the attainment of his happiness.<sup>150</sup>

Still, a clear and forceful presentation of moral truth can never be separated from a profound and heartfelt respect, born of that patient and trusting love which man always needs along his moral journey, a journey frequently wearisome on account of difficulties, weakness and painful situations. The Church can never renounce "the principle of truth and consistency, whereby she does not agree to call good evil and evil good;"<sup>151</sup> she must always be careful not to break the cruised reed or to quench the dimly burning wick (cf. Is 42:3). As Paul VI wrote:

While it is an outstanding manifestation of charity towards souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ, this must always be joined with tolerance and charity, as Christ himself showed by his conversations and dealings with men. Having come not to judge the world but to save it, he was uncompromisingly stern towards sin, but patient and rich in mercy towards sinners.<sup>152</sup>

96. The Church's firmness in defending the universal and unchanging moral norms is not demeaning at all. Its only purpose is to serve man's true freedom. Because there can be no freedom apart from or in opposition to the truth, the categorical--unyielding and uncompromising--defense of the absolutely essential demands of man's personal dignity must be considered the way and the condition for the very existence of freedom.

This service is directed to *every man*, considered in the uniqueness and singularity of his being and existence: only by obedience to universal moral norms does man find full confirmation of his personal uniqueness and the possibility of authentic moral growth. For this very reason, this service is also directed to *all mankind*: it is not only for individuals but also for the community, for society as such. These norms in fact represent the unshakable foundation and solid guarantee of a just and peaceful human coexistence, and hence of genuine democracy, which can come into being and develop only on the basis of the equality of all its members, who possess common rights and

duties. *When it is a matter of the moral norms prohibiting intrinsic evil, there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone.* It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the "poorest of the poor" on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal.

97. In this way, moral norms, and primarily the negative ones, those prohibiting evil, manifest *their meaning and force, both personal and social.* By protecting the inviolable personal dignity of every human being they help to preserve the human social fabric and its proper and fruitful development. The commandments of the second table of the Decalogue in particular--those which Jesus quoted to the young man of the Gospel (cf. Mt 19:19)--constitute the indispensable rules of all social life.

These commandments are formulated in general terms. But the very fact that "the origin, the subject and the purpose of all social institutions is and should be the human person"<sup>153</sup> allows for them to be specified and made more explicit in a detailed code of behavior. The fundamental moral rules of social life thus entail *specific demands* to which both public authorities and citizens are required to pay heed. Even though intentions may sometimes be good, and circumstances frequently difficult, civil authorities and particular individuals never have authority to violate the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. In the end, only a morality which acknowledges certain norms as valid always and for everyone, with no exception, can guarantee the ethical foundation of social coexistence, both on the national and international levels.

#### *Morality and the Renewal of Social and Political Life*

98. In the face of serious forms of social and economic injustice and political corruption affecting entire peoples and nations, there is a growing reaction of indignation on the part of very many people whose fundamental human rights have been trampled upon and held in contempt, as well as an ever more widespread and acute sense of *the need for a radical* personal and social *renewal* capable of ensuring justice, solidarity, honesty and openness.

Certainly there is a long and difficult road ahead; bringing about such a renewal will require enormous effort, especially on account of the number and the gravity of the causes giving rise to and aggravating the situations of injustice present in the world today. But, as history and personal experience show, it is not difficult to discover at the bottom of these situations causes which are properly "cultural," linked to particular ways of looking at man, society and the world. Indeed, at the heart of the issue of culture we find the *moral sense*, which is in turn rooted and fulfilled in the *religious sense*.<sup>154</sup>

99. Only God, the Supreme Good, constitutes the unshakable foundation and essential condition of morality, and thus of the commandments, particularly those negative commandments which always and in every case prohibit behavior and actions incompatible with the personal dignity of every man. The Supreme Good and the moral good meet in *truth*: the truth of God, the Creator and Redeemer, and the truth of man, created and redeemed by him. Only upon this truth is it possible to construct a renewed society and to solve the complex and weighty problems affecting it, above all the problem of overcoming the various forms of totalitarianism, so as to make way for the authentic *freedom* of the person.

Totalitarianism arises out of a denial of truth in the objective sense. If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for

guaranteeing just relations between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interests or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others. . . . Thus, the root of modern totalitarianism is to be found in the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights which no one may violate--no individual, group, class, nation or state. Not even the majority of a social body may violate these rights, by going against the minority, by isolating, oppressing, or exploiting it, or by attempting to annihilate it.<sup>155</sup>

Consequently, the inseparable connection between truth and freedom--which expresses the essential bond between God's wisdom and will--is extremely significant for the life of persons in the socioeconomic and sociopolitical sphere. This is clearly seen in the Church's social teaching--which "belongs to the field . . . of theology and particularly of moral theology"<sup>156</sup>--and from her presentation of commandments governing social, economic and political life, not only with regard to general attitudes but also to precise and specific kinds of behavior and concrete acts.

100. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that in economic matters, respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtue of *temperance*, to moderate our attachment to the goods of this world; of the virtue of *justice*, to preserve our neighbor's rights and to render what is his or her due; and of *solidarity*, following the Golden Rule and in keeping with the generosity of the Lord, who 'though he was rich, yet for your sake . . . became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich' (2 Cor 8:9).<sup>157</sup>

The Catechism goes on to present a series of kinds of behavior and actions contrary to human dignity: theft, deliberate retention of goods lent or objects lost, business fraud (cf. Dt 25:13-16), unjust wages (cf. Dt 24:14-15), forcing up prices by trading on the ignorance or hardship of another (cf. Am 8:4-6), the misappropriation and private use of the corporate property of an enterprise, work badly done, tax fraud, forgery of checks and invoices, excessive expenses, waste, etc.<sup>158</sup> It continues:

The seventh commandment prohibits actions or enterprises which for any reason--selfish or ideological, commercial or totalitarian--lead to the *enslavement of human beings*, disregard for their personal dignity, buying or selling or exchanging them like merchandise. Reducing persons by violence to use-value or a source of profit is a sin against their dignity as persons and their fundamental rights. Saint Paul set a Christian master right about treating his Christian slave 'no longer as a slave but . . . as a brother . . . in the Lord' (Philem 16).<sup>159</sup>

101. In the political sphere, it must be noted that truthfulness in the relations between those governing and those governed, openness in public administration, impartiality in the service of the body politic, respect for the rights of political adversaries, safeguarding the rights of the accused against summary trials and convictions, the just and honest use of public funds, the rejection of equivocal or illicit means in order to gain, preserve or increase power at any cost--all these are principles which are primarily rooted in, and in fact derive their singular urgency from, the transcendent value of the person and the objective moral demands of the functioning of States.<sup>160</sup> When these principles are not observed, the very basis of political coexistence is weakened and the life of society itself is gradually jeopardized, threatened and doomed to decay (cf. Ps 14:3-4; Rev 18:2-3, 9-24). Today, when many countries have seen the fall of ideologies which bound politics to a totalitarian conception of the world--Marxism being the foremost of

these--there is no less grave a danger that the fundamental rights of the human person will be denied and that the religious yearnings which arise in the heart of every human being will be absorbed once again into politics. This is *the risk of an alliance between democracy and ethical relativism*, which would remove any sure moral reference point from political and social life, and on a deeper level make the acknowledgement of truth impossible. Indeed, "if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism."<sup>161</sup>

Thus, in every sphere of personal, family, social and political life, morality--founded upon truth and open in truth to authentic freedom--renders a primordial, indispensable and immensely valuable service not only for the individual person and his growth in the good, but also for society and its genuine development.

### *Grace and Obedience to God's Law*

102. Even in the most difficult situations man must respect the norm of morality so that he can be obedient to God's holy commandment and consistent with his own dignity as a person. Certainly, maintaining a harmony between freedom and truth occasionally demands uncommon sacrifices, and must be won at a high price: it can even involve martyrdom. But, as universal and daily experience demonstrates, man is tempted to break that harmony: "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want" (Rom 7:15, 19).

What is the ultimate source of this inner division of man? His history of sin begins when he no longer acknowledges the Lord as his Creator and himself wishes to be the one who determines, with complete independence, what is good and what is evil. "You will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5): this was the first temptation, and it is echoed in all the other temptations to which man is more easily inclined to yield as a result of the original Fall.

But temptations can be overcome, sins can be avoided, because together with the commandments the Lord gives us the possibility of keeping them: "His eyes are on those who fear him, and he knows every deed of man. He has not commanded any one to be ungodly, and he has not given anyone permission to sin" (Sir 15:19-20). Keeping God's law in particular situations can be difficult, extremely difficult, but it is never impossible. This is the constant teaching of the Church's tradition, and was expressed by the Council of Trent: "But no one, however much justified, ought to consider himself exempt from the observance of the commandments, nor should he employ that rash statement, forbidden by the Fathers under anathema, that the commandments of God are impossible of observance by one who is justified. For God does not command the impossible, but in commanding he admonishes you to do what you can and to pray for what you cannot, and he gives his aid to enable you. His commandments are not burdensome (cf. 1 Jn 5:3); his yoke is easy and his burden light (cf. Mt 11:30)."<sup>162</sup>

103. Man always has before him the spiritual horizon of hope, thanks to the *help of divine grace* and with *the cooperation of human freedom*.

It is in the saving Cross of Jesus, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the Sacraments which flow forth from the pierced side of the Redeemer (cf. Jn 19:34), that believers find the grace and the strength always to keep God's holy law, even amid the gravest of hardships. As Saint Andrew of Crete observes, the law itself "was enlivened by grace and made to serve it in a harmonious and

fruitful combination. Each element preserved its characteristics without change or confusion. In a divine manner, he turned what could be burdensome and tyrannical into what is easy to bear and a source of freedom."<sup>163</sup>

*Only in the mystery of Christ's Redemption do we discover the concrete possibilities of man.* "It would be a very serious error to conclude . . . that the Church's teaching is essentially only an `ideal' which must then be adapted, proportioned, graduated to the so-called concrete possibilities of man, according to a `balancing of the goods in question.' But what are the `concrete possibilities of man'? And of *which* man are we speaking? Of man *dominated* by lust or of man *redeemed by Christ*? This is what is at stake: the *reality* of Christ's redemption. *Christ has redeemed us!* This means that he has given us the possibility of realizing the *entire truth* of our being; he has set our freedom free from the *domination* of concupiscence. And if redeemed man still sins, this is not due to an imperfection of Christ's redemptive act, but to man's will not to avail himself of the grace which flows from that act. God's command is of course proportioned to man's capabilities; but to the capabilities of the man to whom the Holy Spirit has been given; of the man who, though he has fallen into sin, can always obtain pardon and enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit."<sup>164</sup>

104. In this context, appropriate allowance is made both for *God's mercy* towards the sin of the man who experiences conversion and for the *understanding of human weakness*. Such understanding never means compromising and falsifying the standard of good and evil in order to adapt it to particular circumstances. It is quite human for the sinner to acknowledge his weakness and to ask mercy for his failings; what is unacceptable is the attitude of one who makes his own weakness the criterion of the truth about the good, so that he can feel self-justified, without even the need to have recourse to God and his mercy. An attitude of this sort corrupts the morality of society as a whole, since it encourages doubt about the objectivity of the moral law in general and a rejection of the absoluteness of moral prohibitions regarding specific human acts, and it ends up by confusing all judgments about values.

Instead, we should take to heart the *message of the Gospel parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector* (cf. Lk 18:9-14). The tax collector might possibly have had some justification for the sins he committed, such as to diminish his responsibility. But his prayer does not dwell on such justifications, but rather on his own unworthiness before God's infinite holiness: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Lk 18:13). The Pharisee, on the other hand, is self-justified, finding some excuse for each of his failings. Here we encounter two different attitudes of the moral conscience of man in every age. The tax collector represents a "repentant" conscience, fully aware of the frailty of its own nature and seeing in its own failings, whatever their subjective justifications, a confirmation of its need for redemption. The Pharisee represents a "self-satisfied" conscience, under the illusion that it is able to observe the law without the help of grace and convinced that it does not need mercy.

105. All people must take great care not to allow themselves to be tainted by the attitude of the Pharisee, which would seek to eliminate awareness of one's own limits and of one's own sin. In our own day this attitude is expressed particularly in the attempt to adapt the moral norm to one's own capacities and personal interests, and even in the rejection of the very idea of a norm. Accepting, on the other hand, the "disproportion" between the law and human ability (that is, the capacity of the moral forces of man left to himself) kindles the desire for grace and prepares one to receive it. "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" asks the Apostle Paul. And in an

outburst of joy and gratitude--he replies: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom 7:24-25).

We find the same awareness in the following prayer of Saint Ambrose of Milan:

"What then is man, if you do not visit him? Remember, Lord, that you have made me as one who is weak, that you formed me from dust. How can I stand, if you do not constantly look upon me, to strengthen this clay, so that my strength may proceed from your face? *When you hide your face, all grows weak (Ps 104:29)*: if you turn to look at me, woe is me! You have nothing to see in me but the stain of my crimes; there is no gain either in being abandoned or in being seen, because when we are seen, we offend you. Still, we can imagine that God does not reject those he sees, because he purifies those upon whom he gazes. Before him burns a fire capable of consuming our guilt (cf. Joel 2:3)."<sup>165</sup>

### *Morality and New Evangelization*

106. Evangelization is the most powerful and stirring challenge which the Church has been called to face from her very beginning. Indeed, this challenge is posed not so much by the social and cultural milieux which she encounters in the course of history, as by the mandate of the Risen Christ, who defines the very reason for the Church's existence: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16: 15).

At least for many peoples, however, the present time is instead marked by a formidable challenge to undertake a "new evangelization," a proclamation of the Gospel which is always new and always the bearer of new things, an evangelization which must be "new in its ardor, methods and expression."<sup>166</sup> Dechristianization, which weighs heavily upon entire peoples and communities once rich in faith and Christian life, involves not only the loss of faith or in any event its becoming irrelevant for everyday life, but also, and of necessity, *a decline or obscuring of the moral sense*. This comes about both as a result of a loss of awareness of the originality of Gospel morality and as a result of an eclipse of fundamental principles and ethical values themselves. Today's widespread tendencies towards subjectivism, utilitarianism and relativism appear not merely as pragmatic attitudes or patterns of behavior, but rather as approaches having a basis in theory and claiming full cultural and social legitimacy.

107. *Evangelization*--and therefore the "new evangelization"--*also involves the proclamation and presentation of morality*. Jesus himself, even as he preached the Kingdom of God and its saving love, called people to faith and conversion (cf. Mk 1:15). And when Peter, with the other Apostles, proclaimed the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead he held out a new life to be lived, a "way" to be followed, for those who would be disciples of the Risen One (cf. Acts 2:37-41; 3:17-20).

Just as it does in proclaiming the truths of faith, and even more so in presenting the foundations and content of Christian morality, the new evangelization will show its authenticity and unleash all its missionary force when it is carried out through the gift not only of the word proclaimed but also of the word lived. In particular, *the life of holiness* which is resplendent in so many members of the People of God, humble and often unseen, constitutes the simplest and most attractive way to perceive at once the beauty of truth, the liberating force of God's love, and the value of unconditional fidelity to all the demands of the Lord's law, even in the most difficult situations. For this reason, the Church, as a wise teacher of morality, has always invited believers to seek and to find in the saints, and above all in the Virgin Mother of God "full of grace" and "all-holy," the

model, the strength and the joy needed to live a life in accordance with God's commandments and the Beatitudes of the Gospel.

The lives of the saints, as a reflection of the goodness of God--the One who "alone is good"--constitute not only a genuine profession of faith and an incentive for sharing it with others, but also a glorification of God and his infinite holiness. The life of holiness thus brings to full expression and effectiveness the threefold and unitary *munus propheticum sacerdotale et regale* which every Christian receives as a gift by being born again "of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:5) in Baptism. His moral life has the value of a "spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1; cf. Phil 3:3), flowing from and nourished by that inexhaustible source of holiness and glorification of God which is found in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist: by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ's self-giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all his thoughts and deeds. In the moral life the Christian's royal service is also made evident and effective: with the help of grace, the more one obeys the new law of the Holy Spirit, the more one grows in the freedom to which he or she is called by the service of truth, charity and justice.

108. At the heart of the new evangelization and of the new moral life which it proposes and awakens by its fruits of holiness and missionary zeal, there is *the Spirit of Christ*, the principle and strength of the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church. As Pope Paul VI reminded us: "Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit."<sup>167</sup> The Spirit of Jesus, received by the humble and docile heart of the believer, brings about the flourishing of Christian moral life and the witness of holiness amid the great variety of vocations, gifts, responsibilities, conditions and life situations. As Novatian once pointed out--here expressing the authentic faith of the Church--it is the Holy Spirit "who confirmed the hearts and minds of the disciples, who revealed the mysteries of the Gospel, who shed upon them the light of things divine. Strengthened by his gift, they did not fear either prisons or chains for the name of the Lord; indeed they even trampled upon the powers and torments of the world, armed and strengthened by him, having in themselves the gifts which this same Spirit bestows and directs like jewels to the Church, the Bride of Christ. It is in fact he who raises up prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, guides tongues, works wonders and healings, accomplishes miracles, grants the discernment of spirits, assigns governance, inspires counsels, distributes and harmonizes every other charismatic gift. In this way he completes and perfects the Lord's Church everywhere and in all things."<sup>168</sup>

In the living context of this new evangelization, aimed at generating and nourishing "the faith which works through love" (cf. Gal 5:6), and in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit, we can now understand the proper place which *continuing theological reflection about the moral life* holds in the Church, the community of believers. We can likewise speak of the mission and the responsibility proper to moral theologians.

### *The Service of Moral Theologians*

109. The whole Church is called to evangelization and to the witness of a life of faith, by the fact that she has been made a sharer in the *munus propheticum* of the Lord Jesus through the gift of his Spirit. Thanks to the permanent presence of the Spirit of truth in the Church (cf. Jn 14:16-17), "the universal body of the faithful who have received the anointing of the holy one (cf. 1 Jn 2:20, 27) cannot be mistaken in belief. It displays this particular quality through a supernatural sense of the faith in the whole people when, `from the Bishops to the last of the lay faithful,' it



expresses the consensus of all in matters of faith and morals."<sup>169</sup> In order to carry out her prophetic mission, the Church must constantly reawaken or "rekindle" her own life of faith (cf. 2 Tim 1:6), particularly through an ever deeper reflection, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, upon the content of faith itself. *The "vocation" of the theologian in the Church* is specifically at the service of this "believing effort to understand the faith." As the Instruction *Donum Veritatis* teaches: "Among the vocations awakened by the Spirit in the Church is that of the theologian. His role is to pursue in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the word of God found in the inspired Scriptures and handed on by the living Tradition of the Church. He does this in communion with the Magisterium, which has been charged with the responsibility of preserving the deposit of faith. By its nature, faith appeals to reason because it reveals to man the truth of his destiny and the way to attain it. Revealed truth, to be sure, surpasses our telling. All our concepts fall short of its ultimately unfathomable grandeur (cf. Eph 3:19). Nonetheless, revealed truth beckons reason--God's gift fashioned for the assimilation of truth--to enter into its light and thereby come to understand in a certain measure what it has believed. Theological science responds to the invitation of truth as it seeks to understand the faith. It thereby aids the People of God in fulfilling the Apostle's command (cf. 1 Pet 3:15) to give an accounting for their hope to those who ask it."<sup>170</sup>

It is fundamental for defining the very identity of theology, and consequently for theology to carry out its proper mission, to recognize *its profound and vital connection with the Church, her mystery, her life and her mission*: "Theology is an ecclesial science because it grows in the Church and works on the Church. . . . It is a service to the Church and therefore ought to feel itself actively involved in the mission of the Church, particularly in its prophetic mission."<sup>171</sup> By its very nature and procedures, authentic theology can flourish and develop only through a committed and responsible participation in and "belonging" to the Church as a "community of faith." In turn, the fruits of theological research and deeper insight become a source of enrichment for the Church and her life of faith.

110. All that has been said about theology in general can and must also be said for *moral theology*, seen in its specific nature as a scientific reflection on *the Gospel as the gift and commandment of new life*, a reflection on the life which "professes the truth in love" (cf. Eph 4:15) and on the Church's life of holiness, in which there shines forth the truth about the good brought to its perfection. The Church's Magisterium intervenes not only in the sphere of faith, but also, and inseparably so, in the sphere of morals. It has the task of "discerning, by means of judgments normative for the consciences of believers, those acts which in themselves conform to the demands of faith and foster their expression in life and those which, on the contrary, because intrinsically evil, are incompatible with such demands."<sup>172</sup> In proclaiming the commandments of God and the charity of Christ, the Church's Magisterium also teaches the faithful specific particular precepts and requires that they consider them in conscience as morally binding. In addition, the Magisterium carries out an important work of vigilance, warning the faithful of the presence of possible errors, even merely implicit ones, when their consciences fail to acknowledge the correctness and the truth of the moral norms, which the Magisterium teaches.

This is the point at which to consider the specific task of all those who by mandate of their legitimate Pastors teach moral theology in seminaries and faculties of theology. They have the grave duty to instruct the faithful--especially future Pastors--about all those commandments and practical norms authoritatively declared by the Church.<sup>173</sup> While recognizing the possible limitations of the human arguments employed by the Magisterium, moral theologians are called to develop a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying its teachings and to expound the validity

and obligatory nature of the precepts it proposes, demonstrating their connection with one another and their relation with man's ultimate end.<sup>174</sup> Moral theologians are to set forth the Church's teaching and to give, in the exercise of their ministry, the example of a loyal assent, both internal and external, to the Magisterium's teaching in the areas of both dogma and morality.<sup>175</sup> Working together in cooperation with the hierarchical Magisterium, theologians will be deeply concerned to clarify ever more fully the biblical foundations, the ethical significance and the anthropological concerns which underlie the moral doctrine and the vision of man set forth by the Church.

111. The service which moral theologians are called to provide at the present time is of the utmost importance, not only for the Church's life and mission, but also for human society and culture. Moral theologians have the task, in close and vital connection with biblical and dogmatic theology, to highlight through their scientific reflection "that dynamic aspect which will elicit the response that man must give to the divine call which comes in the process of his growth in love, within a community of salvation. In this way, moral theology will acquire an inner spiritual dimension in response to the need to develop fully the *imago Dei* present in man, and in response to the laws of spiritual development described by Christian ascetical and mystical theology."<sup>176</sup>

Certainly moral theology and its teaching are meeting with particular difficulty today. Because the Church's morality necessarily involves a *normative* dimension, moral theology cannot be reduced to a body of knowledge worked out purely in the context of the so-called *behavioral sciences*. The latter are concerned with the phenomenon of morality as a historical and social fact; moral theology, however, while needing to make use of the behavioral and natural sciences, does not rely on the results of formal empirical observation or phenomenological understanding alone. Indeed, the relevance of the behavioral sciences for moral theology must always be measured against the primordial question: What is good or evil? What must be done to have eternal life?

112. The moral theologian must therefore exercise careful discernment in the context of today's prevalently scientific and technical culture, exposed as it is to the dangers of relativism, pragmatism and positivism. From the theological viewpoint, moral principles are not dependent upon the historical moment in which they are discovered. Moreover, the fact that some believers act without following the teachings of the Magisterium, or erroneously consider as morally correct a kind of behavior declared by their Pastors as contrary to the law of God, cannot be a valid argument for rejecting the truth of the moral norms taught by the Church. The affirmation of moral principles is not within the competence of formal empirical methods. While not denying the validity of such methods, but at the same time not restricting its viewpoint to them, moral theology, faithful to the supernatural sense of the faith, takes into account first and foremost *the spiritual dimension of the human heart and its vocation to divine love*.

In fact, while the behavioral sciences, like all experimental sciences, develop an empirical and statistical concept of "normality," faith teaches that this normality itself bears the traces of a fall from man's original situation--in other words, it is affected by sin. Only Christian faith points out to man the way to return to "the beginning" (cf. Mt 19:8), a way which is often quite different from that of empirical normality. Hence the behavioral sciences, despite the great value of the information which they provide, cannot be considered decisive indications of moral norms. It is the Gospel which reveals the full truth about man and his moral journey, and thus enlightens and admonishes sinners; it proclaims to them God's mercy, which is constantly at work to preserve them both from despair at their inability fully to know and keep God's law and from the presumption that they can be saved without merit. God also reminds sinners of the joy of

forgiveness, which alone grants the strength to see in the moral law a liberating truth, a grace filled source of hope, a path of life.

113. Teaching moral doctrine involves the conscious acceptance of these intellectual, spiritual and pastoral responsibilities. Moral theologians, who have accepted the charge of teaching the Church's doctrine, thus have a grave duty to train the faithful to make this moral discernment, to be committed to the true good and to have confident recourse to God's grace.

While exchanges and conflicts of opinion may constitute normal expressions of public life in a representative democracy, moral teaching certainly cannot depend simply upon respect for a process: indeed, it is in no way established by following the rules and deliberative procedures typical of a democracy. *Dissent*, in the form of carefully orchestrated protests and polemics carried on in the media, *is opposed to ecclesial communion and to a correct understanding of the hierarchical constitution of the People of God*. Opposition to the teaching of the Church's Pastors cannot be seen as a legitimate expression either of Christian freedom or of the diversity of the Spirit's gifts. When this happens, the Church's Pastors have the duty to act in conformity with their apostolic mission, insisting that *the right of the faithful* to receive Catholic doctrine in its purity and integrity must always be respected. "Never forgetting that he too is a member of the People of God, the theologian must be respectful of them, and be committed to offering them a teaching which in no way does harm to the doctrine of the faith."<sup>177</sup>

#### *Our Own Responsibilities as Pastors*

114. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, responsibility for the faith and the life of faith of the People of God is particularly incumbent upon the Church's Pastors: "Among the principal tasks of bishops the preaching of the Gospel is preeminent. For the bishops are the heralds of the faith who bring new disciples to Christ. They are authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people entrusted to them the faith to be believed and put into practice; they illustrate this faith in the light of the Holy Spirit, drawing out of the treasury of Revelation things old and new (cf. Mt 13:52); they make it bear fruit and they vigilantly ward off errors that are threatening their flock (cf. 2 Tim 4:14)."<sup>178</sup>

It is our common duty, and even before that our common grace, as Pastors and Bishops of the Church, to teach the faithful the things which lead them to God, just as the Lord Jesus did with the young man in the Gospel. Replying to the question: "What good must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus referred the young man to God, the Lord of creation and of the Covenant. He reminded him of the moral commandments already revealed in the Old Testament and he indicated their spirit and deepest meaning by inviting the young man to follow him in poverty, humility and love: "Come, follow me!" The truth of this teaching was sealed on the Cross in the Blood of Christ: in the Holy Spirit, it has become the new law of the Church and of every Christian.

This "answer" to the question about morality has been entrusted by Jesus Christ in a particular way to us, the Pastors of the Church; we have been called to make it the object of our preaching, in the fulfillment of our *munus propheticum*. At the same time, our responsibility as Pastors with regard to Christian moral teaching must also be exercised as part of the *munus sacerdotale*: this happens when we dispense to the faithful the gifts of grace and sanctification as an effective means for obeying God's holy law, and when with our constant and confident prayers we support believers in their efforts to be faithful to the demands of the faith and to live in accordance with the Gospel

(cf. Col 1:9-12). Especially today, Christian moral teaching must be one of the chief areas in which we exercise our pastoral vigilance, in carrying out our *munus regale*.

115. This is the first time, in fact, that the Magisterium of the Church has set forth in detail the fundamental elements of this teaching, and presented the principles for the pastoral discernment necessary in practical and cultural situations which are complex and even crucial.

In the light of Revelation and of the Church's constant teaching, especially that of the Second Vatican Council, I have briefly recalled the essential characteristics of freedom, as well as the fundamental values connected with the dignity of the person and the truth of his acts, so as to be able to discern in obedience to the moral law a grace and a sign of our adoption in the one Son (cf. Eph 1:4-6). Specifically, this encyclical has evaluated certain trends in moral theology today. I now pass this evaluation on to you, in obedience to the word of the Lord who entrusted to Peter the task of strengthening his brethren (cf. Lk 22:32), in order to clarify and aid our common discernment.

Each of us knows how important is the teaching which represents the central theme of this encyclical and which is today being restated with the authority of the Successor of Peter. Each of us can see the seriousness of what is involved, not only for individuals but also for the whole of society, with the *reaffirmation of the universality and immutability of the moral commandments, particularly those which prohibit always and without exception intrinsically evil acts*.

In acknowledging these commandments, Christian hearts and our pastoral charity listen to the call of the One who "first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). God asks us to be holy as he is holy (cf. Lev 19:2), to be--in Christ--perfect as he is perfect (cf. Mt 5:48). The unwavering demands of that commandment are based upon God's infinitely merciful love (cf. Lk 6:36), and the purpose of that commandment is to lead us, by the grace of Christ, on the path of that fullness of life proper to the children of God.

116. We have the duty, as bishops, to *be vigilant that the word of God is faithfully taught*. My Brothers in the Episcopate, it is part of our pastoral ministry to see to it that this moral teaching is faithfully handed down and to have recourse to appropriate measures to ensure that the faithful are guarded from every doctrine and theory contrary to it. In carrying out this task we are all assisted by theologians; even so, theological opinions constitute neither the rule nor the norm of our teaching. Its authority is derived, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit and in communion *cum Petro et sub Petro*, from our fidelity to the Catholic faith which comes from the Apostles. As bishops, we have the "grave obligation" to be *personally* vigilant that the "sound doctrine" (1 Tim 1:10) of faith and morals is taught in our dioceses.

A particular responsibility is incumbent upon bishops with regard to *Catholic institutions*. Whether these are agencies for the pastoral care of the family or for social work, or institutions dedicated to teaching or health care, bishops can canonically erect and recognize these structures and delegate certain responsibilities to them. Nevertheless, bishops are never relieved of their own personal obligations. It falls to them, in communion with the Holy See, both to grant the title "Catholic" to Church-related schools,<sup>179</sup> universities,<sup>180</sup> health-care facilities and counseling services, and, in cases of a serious failure to live up to that title, to take it away.

117. In the heart of every Christian, in the inmost depths of each person, there is always an echo of the question which the young man in the Gospel once asked Jesus: "Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?" (Mt 19:16). Everyone, however, needs to address this question to

the "Good Teacher," since he is the only one who can answer in the fullness of truth, in all situations, in the most varied of circumstances. And when Christians ask him the question which rises from their conscience, the Lord replies in the words of the New Covenant which have been entrusted to his Church. As the Apostle Paul said of himself, we have been sent "to preach the Gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the Cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (1 Cor 1:17). The Church's answer to man's question contains the wisdom and power of Christ Crucified, the Truth which gives of itself.

*When people ask the Church the questions raised by their consciences, when the faithful in the Church turn to their bishops and pastors, the Church's reply contains the voice of Jesus Christ, the voice of the truth about good and evil.* In the words spoken by the Church there resounds, in people's inmost being, the voice of God who "alone is good" (cf. Mt 19:17), who alone "is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16).

Through the *anointing of the Spirit* this gentle but challenging word becomes light and life for man. Again the Apostle Paul invites us to have confidence, because "our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit. . . . The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:5-6,17-18).

## CONCLUSION

### *Mary, Mother of Mercy*

118. At the end of these considerations, let us entrust ourselves, the sufferings and the joys of our life, the moral life of believers and people of good will, and the research of moralists, to Mary, Mother of God and Mother of Mercy.

Mary is Mother of Mercy because her Son, Jesus Christ, was sent by the Father as the revelation of God's mercy (cf. Jn 3:16-18). Christ came not to condemn but to forgive, to show mercy (cf. Mt 9:13). And the greatest mercy of all is found in his being in our midst and calling us to meet him and to confess with Peter, that he is "the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). No human sin can erase the mercy of God, or prevent him from unleashing all his triumphant power, if we only call upon him. Indeed, sin itself makes even more radiant the love of the Father who, in order to ransom a slave, sacrificed his Son:<sup>181</sup> his mercy towards us is Redemption. This Mercy reaches its fullness in the gift of the Spirit who bestows new life and demands that it be lived. No matter how many and great the obstacles put in his way by human frailty and sin, the Spirit, who renews the face of the earth (cf. Ps 104:30), makes possible the miracle of the perfect accomplishment of the good. This renewal, which gives the ability to do what is good, noble, beautiful, pleasing to God and in conformity with his will, is in some way the flowering of the gift of mercy, which offers liberation from the slavery of evil and gives the strength to sin no more. Through the gift of new life, Jesus makes us sharers in his love and leads us to the Father in the Spirit.

119. Such is the consoling certainty of Christian faith, the source of its profound humanity and *extraordinary simplicity*. At times, in the discussions about new and complex moral problems, it can seem that Christian morality is in itself too demanding, difficult to understand and almost impossible to practice. This is untrue, since Christian morality consists, in the simplicity of the Gospel, in *following Jesus Christ*, in abandoning oneself to him, in letting oneself be transformed

by his grace and renewed by his mercy, gifts which come to us in the living communion of his Church. Saint Augustine reminds us that "he who would live has a place to live, and has everything needed to live. Let him draw near, let him believe, let him become part of the body, that he may have life. Let him not shrink from the unity of the members."<sup>182</sup> By the light of the Holy Spirit, the living essence of Christian morality can be understood by everyone, even the least learned, but particularly those who are able to preserve an "undivided heart" (Ps 86:11). On the other hand, this evangelical simplicity does not exempt one from facing reality in its complexity; rather it can lead to a more genuine understanding of reality, inasmuch as following Christ will gradually bring out the distinctive character of authentic Christian morality, while providing the vital energy needed to carry it out. It is the task of the Church's Magisterium to see that the dynamic process of following Christ develops in an organic manner, without the falsification or obscuring of its moral demands, with all their consequences. The one who loves Christ keeps his commandments (cf. Jn 14: 15).

120. Mary is also Mother of Mercy because it is to her that Jesus entrusts his Church and all humanity. At the foot of the Cross, when she accepts John as her son, when she asks, together with Christ, forgiveness from the Father for those who do not know what they do (cf. Lk 23:34), Mary experiences, in perfect docility to the Spirit, the richness and the universality of God's love, which opens her heart and enables it to embrace the entire human race. Thus Mary becomes Mother of each and every one of us, the Mother who obtains for us divine mercy. Mary is the radiant sign and inviting model of the moral life. As Saint Ambrose put it, "The life of this one person can serve as a model for everyone,"<sup>183</sup> and while speaking specifically to virgins but within a context open to all, he affirmed: "The first stimulus to learning is the nobility of the teacher. Who can be more noble than the Mother of God? Who can be more glorious than the one chosen by Glory Itself?"<sup>184</sup> Mary lived and exercised her freedom precisely by giving herself to God and accepting God's gift within herself. Until the time of his birth, she sheltered in her womb the Son of God who became man; she raised him and enabled him to grow, and she accompanied him in that supreme act of freedom which is the complete sacrifice of his own life. By the gift of herself, Mary entered fully into the plan of God who gives himself to the world. By accepting and pondering in her heart events which she did not always understand (cf. Lk 2:19), she became the model of all those who hear the word of God and keep it (cf. Lk 11:28), and merited the title of "Seat of Wisdom." This Wisdom is Jesus Christ himself, the Eternal Word of God, who perfectly reveals and accomplishes the will of the Father (cf. Heb 10:5-10). Mary invites everyone to accept this Wisdom. To us too she addresses the command she gave to the servants at Cana in Galilee during the marriage feast: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

Mary shares our human condition, but in complete openness to the grace of God. Not having known sin, she is able to have compassion on every kind of weakness. She understands sinful man and loves him with a Mother's love. Precisely for this reason she is on the side of truth and shares the Church's burden in recalling always and to everyone the demands of morality. Nor does she permit sinful man to be deceived by those who claim to love him by justifying his sin, for she knows that the sacrifice of Christ her Son would thus be emptied of its power. No absolution offered by beguiling doctrines, even in the areas of philosophy and theology, can make man truly happy: only the Cross and the glory of the Risen Christ can grant peace to his conscience and salvation to his life.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on August 6, Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, in the year 1993, the fifteenth of my Pontificate.

## NOTES

1. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.
2. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, 9.
4. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.
5. Paul VI, Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations (October 4, 1965), 1: AAS 57 (1965), 878; cf. Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967), 13: AAS 59 (1967), 263-264.
6. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.
7. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 16.
8. Pius XII had already pointed out this doctrinal development: cf. *Radio Message* for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII (June 1, 1941): AAS 33 (1941), 195-205. Also John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961): AAS 53 (1961), 410-413.
9. Apostolic Letter *Spiritus Domini* (August 1, 1987): AAS 79 (1987), 1374.
10. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1692.
11. Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* (October 11, 1992), 4.
12. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10.
13. Cf. Apostolic Epistle *Parati Semper* to the Young People of the World on the Occasion of the International Year of Youth (March 31, 1985), 2-8: AAS 77 (1985), 581-600.
14. Cf. Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 16.
15. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979), 13: AAS 71 (1979), 282.
16. *Ibid.*, 10; *loc. cit.*, 274.
17. *Exameron*, Dies VI, Sermo IX, 8, 50: CSEL 32, 24.
18. Saint Leo the Great, *Sermo XCII*, Chap. 111: PL 54, 454.
19. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *In Duo Praecepta Caritatis et in Cecem Legis Praecepta. Prologus: Opuscula Theologica*, II, No. 1129, Ed. Taurinen (1954), 245; cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1955.
20. Cf. Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, Q. 64: PG 90, 723-728.
21. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.
22. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2070.
23. *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 41, 10: CCL 36, 363.
24. Cf. Saint Augustine, *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, I, 1, 1: CCL 35, 1-2.
25. *In Psalmum CXVIII Expositio*, Sermo 18, 37: PL 15, 1541; cf. Saint Chromatius of Aquileia, *Tractatus in Matthaicum*, XX, 1, 1-4: CCL 9/A, 291-292.
26. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1717.
27. *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 41, 10: CCL 36, 363.
28. *Ibid.*, 21, 8: CCL 36, 216.
29. *Ibid.*, 82, 3: CCL 36, 533.
30. *De Spiritu et Litera*, 19, 34: CSEL 60, 187.
31. *Confessiones*, X, 29, 40: CCL 27, 176; cf. *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, XV: PL 44, 899.

32. Cf. *De Spiritu et Littera*, 21, 36; 26, 46: *CSEL* 60, 189-190; 200-201.
33. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 106, a. 1 conclusion and ad 2um.
34. *In Matthaeum*, Hom. I, 1: PG 57, 15.
35. Cf. Saint Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 26, 2-5: *SCh* 100/2, 718-729.
36. Cf. Saint Justin, *Apologia*, 1, 66: PG 6, 427-430.
37. Cf. I Pt 2:12ff; cf. *Didache*, II, 2: *Patres Apostolici*, ed. F. X. Funk, 1, 6-9; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, I, 10; II, 10: PG 8, 3ff-364; 497-536; Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, IX, 8: *CSEL*, 69, 24.
38. Cf. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Magnesios*, VI, 1-2: *Patres Apostolici*, ed F.X. Funk, 1, 234-235; Saint Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 33: 1, 6, 7; *SCh* 100; 2, 802-805; 814-815; 816-819.
39. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 8.
40. Cf. *ibid*
41. *Ibid.*, 10.
42. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 747, 2.
43. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 7.
44. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.
45. Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 16.
46. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 62.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10.
49. Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, Chap. 4: *DS*, 3018.
50. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 1.
51. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 43-44.
52. Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1, referring to John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963): *AAS* 55 (1963), 279; *ibid.*, 265, and to Pius XII, *Radio Message* (December 24, 1944): *AAS* 37 (1945), 14.
53. Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1
54. Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979), 17: *AAS* 71 (1979), 295-300; *Address* to those taking part in the Fifth International Colloquium of Juridical Studies (March 10, 1984), 4: *Insegnamenti* VII, 1 (1984), 656; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation *Libertatis Conscientia* (March 22, 1986), 19: *AAS* 79 (1987), 561.
55. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 11.
56. *Ibid.*, 17.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2; cf. also Gregory XVI, Encyclical Epistle *Mirari Vos Arbitramur* (August 15, 1832): *Acta Gregorii Papae XVI*, I, 169-174; Pius IX, Encyclical Epistle *Quanta Cura* (December



- 8, 1864): *Pii IX P.M. Acta*, I, 3, 687-700; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum* (June 20, 1888): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, VIII, Romae 1889, 212-246.
59. A Letter Addressed to His Grace the Duke of Norfolk: *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* (Uniform Edition: Longman, Green and Company, London, 1868-1881), vol. 2, p. 250.
60. Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 40 and 43.
61. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 71, a. 6; see also ad 5um .
62. Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis* (August 12, 1950): AAS 42 (1950), 561-562.
63. Cf. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Sess. VI, Decree on Justification *Cum Hoc Tempore*, Canons 19-21: *DS*, 1569-1571.
64. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 17.
65. *De Homini Opificio*, Chap. 4: *PG* 44, 135-136.
66. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 36.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*
69. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 93, a. 3, ad 2um, cited by John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963): AAS 55 (1963), 271.
70. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 41.
71. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *In Duo Praecepta Caritatis et in Decem Legis Praecepta. Prologus: Opuscula Theologica*, II, No. 1129, Ed. Taurinen. (1954), 245.
72. Cf. Address to a Group of Bishops from the United States on the occasion of their *ad Limina* Visit (October 15, 1988), 6: *Insegnamenti*, XI 3 (1988), 1228.
73. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 47.
74. Cf. Saint Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalmum LXII*, 16: *CCL* 39, 804.
75. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 17.
76. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2.
77. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1955.
78. Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3.
79. *Contra Faustum*, Bk 22, Chap. 27: *PL* 42, 418.
80. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 93, a. 1.
81. Cf. *ibid.*, I-II, q. 90, a. 4, ad lum.
82. *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 91, a. 2.
83. Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum* (June 20, 1888): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, VIII, Romae 1889, 219.
84. *In Epistulam ad Romanos*, c. VIII, lect. I.
85. Cf. Sess. IV, Decree on Justification *Cum Hoc Tempore*, Chap. 1: *DS*, 1521.
86. Cf. Ecumenical Council of Vienne, Constitution *Fidei Catholicae*: *DS*, 902; Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council, Bull *Apostolici Regiminis*: *DS*, 1440.
87. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 14.
88. Cf. Sess. VI, Decree on Justification *Cum Hoc Tempore*, Chap. 15: *DS*, 1544. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today

cites other texts of the Old and New Testaments which condemn as mortal sins certain modes of conduct involving the body: cf. *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 17: AAS 77 (1985), 218-223.

89. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 51.

90. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation *Donum Vitae* (February 22, 1987), Introduction, 3: AAS 80 (1988), 74; cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* (July 25, 1968), 10: AAS 60 (1968), 487-488.

91. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (November 22, 1981), 11: AAS 74 (1982), 92.

92. *De Trinitate*, XIV, 15, 21: CCL 50/A, 451.

93. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

94. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 10; Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics *Persona Humana* (December 29, 1975), 4: AAS 68 (1976), 80: "But in fact, divine Revelation and, in its own proper order, philosophical wisdom, emphasize the authentic exigencies of human nature. They thereby necessarily manifest the existence of immutable laws inscribed in the constitutive elements of human nature and which are revealed to be identical in all beings endowed with reason."

95. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 29.

96. Cf. *ibid.*, 16.

97. *Ibid.*, 10.

98. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 108, a. 1. St. Thomas bases the fact that moral norms, even in the context of the New Law, are not merely formal in character but have a determined content, upon the assumption of human nature by the Word.

99. Saint Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium Primum*, c. 23: PL 50, 668.

100. The development of the Church's moral doctrine is similar to that doctrine of the faith (cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, Chap. 4: DS, 3020, and Canon 4: DS, 3024). The words spoken by John XXIII at the opening of the Second Vatican Council can also be applied to moral doctrine: "This certain and unchanging teaching (i.e., Christian doctrine in its completeness), to which the faithful owe obedience, needs to be more deeply understood and set forth in a way adapted to the needs of our time. Indeed, this deposit of the faith, the truths contained in our time-honored teaching, is one thing; the manner in which these truths are set forth (with their meaning preserved intact) is something else": AAS 54 (1962), 792; cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, October 12, 1962, p. 2.

101. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

102. *Ibid.*

103. In *II Librum Sentent.*, dist. 39, a. 1, q. 3, conclusion: Ed. Ad Claras Aquas, II 907b.

104. Address (General Audience, August 17, 1983), 2: *Insegnamenti*, VI, 2 (1983), 256.

105. Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, Instruction on "Situation Ethics" *Contra Doctrinam* (February 2, 1956): AAS 48 (1956), 144.

106. Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (May 18, 1986), 43: AAS 78 (1986), 859; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16; Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3.

107. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.
108. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 17, a. 4.
109. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.
110. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 45, a. 2.
111. Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 14.
112. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 5; cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, Chap. 3: *DS*, 3008.
113. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 5. Cf. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Certain Questions Regarding Sexual Ethics *Persona Humana* (December 29, 1975), 10: *AAS* 68 (1976), 88-90.
114. Cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 17: *AAS* 77 (1985), 218-223.
115. Sess. VI, Decree on Justification *Cum Hoc Tempore*, Chap. 15: *DS*, 1544; Canon 19: *DS*, 1569.
116. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 17: *ASS* 77 (1985), 221.
117. *Ibid.*: *loc. cit.*, 223.
118. *Ibid.*: *loc. cit.*, 222.
119. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 17.
120. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 1, a. 3: "*Idem sunt actus morales et actus humani.*"
121. *De Vita Moysis*, II, 2-3: *PG* 44, 327-328.
122. Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 148, a. 3.
123. The Second Vatican Council, in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, makes this clear: "This applies not only to Christians but to all men of good will in whose hearts grace is secretly at work. Since Christ died for all and since man's ultimate calling comes from God and is therefore a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God": *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.
124. *Tractatus ad Tiberium Diaconum sociosque*, II. *Responsiones ad Tiberium Diaconum sociosque*: Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *In Divi Johannis Evangelium*, vol. III, ed. Philip Edward Pusey, Brussels, *Culture et Civilisation* (1965), 590.
125. Cf. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session VI, Decree on Justification *Cum Hoc Tempore*, Canon 19: *DS*, 1569. See also: Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus Dei Filius* (September 8, 1713) against the Errors of Paschasius Quesnel, Nos. 5356: *DS*, 2453-2456.
126. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 6.
127. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1761.
128. *In Duo Praecepta Caritatis et in Decem Legis Praecepta. De Dilectione Dei: Opuscula Theologica*, II, No. 1168, Ed. Taurinen. (1954), 250.
129. Saint Alphonsus Maria De Liguori, *Pratica di amar Gesù Cristo*, VII, 3.
130. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 100, a. 1.

131. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 17: AAS 77 (1985), 221; cf. Paul VI, *Address to Members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*, (September 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 962: "Far be it from Christians to be led to embrace another opinion, as if the Council taught that nowadays some things are permitted which the Church had previously declared intrinsically evil. Who does not see in this the rise of a depraved *moral relativism*, one that clearly endangers the Church's entire doctrinal heritage?"
132. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 27.
133. Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* (July 25, 1968), 14: AAS 60 (1968), 490-491 .
134. *Contra Mendacium*, VII, 18: PL 40, 528; cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, IX, q. 7, a. 2; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 1753-1755.
135. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7.
136. *Address to those taking part in the International Congress of Moral Theology* (April 10, 1986), 1: *Insegnamenti IX*, 1 (1986), 970.
137. *Ibid.*, 2: *loc. cit.*, 970-971.
138. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.
139. Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979), 12: AAS 71 (1979), 280-281.
140. *Enarratio in Psalmum XCIX*, 7: CCL 39, 1397.
141. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 36; cf. Encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979), 21: AAS 71 (1979), 316-317.
142. *Roman Missal*, Prayer for the Memorial of the Beheading of John the Baptist, Martyr, August 29.
143. Saint Bede the Venerable, *Homeliarum Evangelii Libri*, II, 23: CCL 122, 556-557.
144. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 27.
145. *Ad Romanos*, VI, 2-3: *Patres Apostolici*, ed. F. X. Funk, 1, 260-261.
146. *Moralia in Job*, VII, 21, 24: PL 75, 778: "huius mundi aspera pro aeternis praemiis amare. "
147. "Summum crede nefas animam praeferre pudori et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas": *Satirae*, VIII, 83-84.
148. *Apologia II*, 8: PG 6, 457-458.
149. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (November 22, 1981), 33: AAS 74 (1982), 120.
150. Cf. *Ibid.*, 34: *loc. cit.*, 123-125.
151. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 34: AAS 77 (1985), 272.
152. Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* (July 25, 1968), 29: AAS 60 (1968), 501.
153. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 25.
154. Cf. Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), 24: AAS 83 (1991), 821-822.
155. *Ibid.*, 44: *loc. cit.*, 848-849; cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum* (June 20, 1888), *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, VIII, Romae 1889, 224-226.
156. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (December 30, 1987), 41: AAS 80 (1988), 571.
157. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2407.

158. Cf. *ibid.*, Nos. 2408-2413.
159. *Ibid.*, No. 2414.
160. Cf. Encyclical Letter *Christifideles Laici* (December 30, 1988), 42: AAS 81 (1989), 472-476.
161. Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), 46: AAS 83 (1991), 850.
162. Sess. VI, Decree on Justification *Cum Hoc Tempore*, Chap. 11: *DS*, 1536; cf. Canon 18: *DS*, 1568. The celebrated text from Saint Augustine, which the Council cites is found in *De Natura et Gratia*, 43, 40 (*CSEL* 60, 270).
163. *Oratio* 1: *PG* 97, 805-806.
164. Address to those taking part in a course on "responsible parenthood" (March 1, 1984), 4: *Insegnamenti* VII, 1 (1984), 583.
165. *De Interpellatione David*, IV, 6, 22: *CSEL* 32/2, 283-284.
166. Address to the Bishops of CELAM (March 9, 1983), III: *Insegnamenti*, VI, 1 (1983), 698.
167. 167. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975), 75: AAS 68 (1976), 64.
168. *De Trinitate*, XXIX, 9-10: *CCL* 4, 70.
169. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 12.
170. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (May 24, 1990), 6: AAS 82 (1990), 1552.
171. Address to the Professors and Students of the Pontifical Gregorian University (December 15, 1979), 6: *Insegnamenti* II, 2 (1979), 1424.
172. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (May 24, 1990), 16: AAS 82 (1990), 1557.
173. Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canons 252, 1; 659, 3.
174. Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, Chap. 4: *DS*, 3016.
175. Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* (July 25, 1968), 28: AAS 60 (1968), 501.
176. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Theological Formation of Future Priests* (February 22, 1976), n. 100. See Nos. 95-101, which present the prospects and conditions for a fruitful renewal of moral theology: *loc. cit.*, 39-41.
177. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian *Donum Veritatis* (May 24, 1990), 11: AAS 82 (1990), 1554; cf. in particular Nos. 32-39, devoted to the problem of dissent: *ibid.*, *loc. cit.*, 1562-1568.
178. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 25.
179. Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 803, 3.
180. Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 808.
181. "*O inaestimabilis dilectio caritatis: ut servum redimeres, Filium tradidisti!*" *Missale Romanum, In Resurrectione Domini, Praeconium Paschale*.
182. *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 26, 13: *CCL*, 36, 266.
183. *De Virginibus*, Bk. II, Chap. II, 15: *PL* 16, 222.
184. *Ibid.*, Bk. II, Chap. II, 7: *PL* 16, 220.



**Appendix II**  
**Comment on the Encyclical *Splendor Veritatis***  
*Paul Ricoeur*

Exegetes agree that the Gospel of Matthew bears witness to a key juncture in what was still an incomplete rupture of the Church with Judaism. Thus, certain passages seem very hard, particularly with regard to the Pharisees, while on the contrary others underline the continuity between the Mosaic law and the teaching of Christ. The text chosen by the Pope at the beginning of the encyclical--the episode of the young rich man (Mt 19:16-22)--reflects the unstable equilibrium between continuity as regards Judaism and the novelty of "Come, follow me" (v. 20).

The text is intriguing because, after the repetition and the confirmation of some of the prescriptions of the Mosaic law, it announces a lack on the part of the young man. The response to that question "What more must I do?" (v. 20) has an extremist tone: "Go sell all your possessions" (v. 21). This response of Jesus would seem to be a singular call, rather than a universal law: "You . . . follow me." But that singular aspect hardly appears in the encyclical, which insists almost exclusively on what is immutable and universal.

Thus, the text tends to weaken the tension between the immutable character of the law, in this case of the Mosaic law, and that which is unique in the meeting with Christ. Is the notion of truth as univocal as the encyclical suggests; can one short circuit history like that to situate oneself in the unchangeable and universal?

Take the Mosaic law. The Encyclical recalls quite rightly that its teaching is tied to the affirmation: "I am the Eternal, your God" (Ex 20:2)--and is thus an event of liberation. In a parallel manner, it is said regarding divorce: "It is because of the hardening of your hearts that Moses permitted it; in the beginning it was not so" (Mt. 19:9). Here the Scripture introduces a bit of leeway, recognizing an intersection between the historical and the prescriptive which cannot be ignored.

In contrast, *Veritatis Splendor* compresses the two levels. For the very characteristic sentiment of accompanying history, which takes precise form in the invitation to follow Christ, it substitutes a quite Greek conception, rendered neo-Platonic through Saint Augustine, of an unchangeable and non-historical order. John Paul II has a very beautiful formula with regard to the Beatitudes: they delineate "a sort of self-portrait of Christ" (n. 16). There is here something other than a universal prescription, whose two pillars in our culture are Greek immutability and Kantian formalism.

This slippage from the historical to the immutable returns to shape the general tone of the Encyclical. It is more of an admonition, particularly with regard to certain theologians, than exploratory. The preamble is already restrictive. It begins on the "splendor of the truth," but immediately after there is an accumulation of words ending in "ism": individualism, subjectivism, etc. Rather than only denouncing deviations, it is necessary to look at the real underlying perplexities. One can criticize historicism, but behind it lies the discovery that history brings new situations and equally new perplexities--and hence a field of possible variations.

Those perplexities are reflected in the exegesis of Saint Matthew's Gospel. One reads there: "I have not come to abolish, but to complete;" "They have said, but I say to you". Kierkegaard had this point in mind when he spoke of the "proposition of the impossible." Luther, analyzing the different usages of the law, distinguished a law intended to institute order in human action from a law made in order to show our incapacity to accomplish it. The two functions are not co-terminus. The encyclical cites the second chapter of the Letter to the Romans which underlines the first

aspect. But, in that same Epistle Saint Paul also describes the law as revealing sin, as established, one might say, to make us despair. Luther perceived this well.

The Encyclical does not ignore the dialectic of norm and of failure, of law and of grace, but it lessens the tension in favor of a directive teaching in search of coherence. In itself this deserves respect: *Veritatis Splendor* is addressed to a troubled community to which it gives precise and fixed points of reference. But it does not sufficiently take into account the real reasons for the trouble.

At the end of the second chapter on the nature of the moral act, on conscience, the Encyclical enters into theological controversy, taking up extremely disputed issues. In doing so, it fails to consider not only changes in customs, but evolution in reflexion, in doctrine. It stops at Saint Thomas as if nothing had happened since, as if Kant and Hegel had not written. It criticizes certain forms of consequentialism which theologians have drawn from utilitarianism. This latter is a respectable moral doctrine; it is not easy, but rigorous because it puts the general interest above individual interest. Further, one cannot eliminate one of the characteristics of consequentialism, namely its insistence that men are responsible for the consequences of their actions and not simply of their intentions and motivations. Paradoxically, after what I have said, the Encyclical has a very Kantian tone in not taking account of circumstances and exceptions. The limitation of Kant is his formalism; I find *Veritatis Splendor* to be not sufficiently problematic, but too directive.

The text of the rich young man places one on the cutting edge, confronting simultaneously both the continuation of the law and its rupture, to such a point that some commentators have underlined the anti-jewish, that is, anti-semitic character of the gospel of Matthew. Others have seen it, forty five years into our epoch, as a consolidation of the difficult position of Christians in view of their expulsion from the synagogue. The point of the text is: "What is lacking to me?" (v. 20), hence obedience to the law leaves a lack. Among other things, this manifests well the magnificence of the goal of the Encyclical which praises sacrifice, even martyrdom, and points in the direction of the excess, that is, of going beyond what the law requires.

Further, one must take into consideration the outcome of the exchange between Jesus and the young man. The latter "went away sadly" (v. 22). The difficulty of Matthew with regard to Judaism becomes manifest in that remark. It manifests that at a particular moment the good Jew cannot follow Jesus. If the question "What is lacking to me?" manifests an opening with regard to the law, the young man also closes that door right away. The gospel seems to him too much. It destabilizes him, and indeed the text of Matthew is very destabilizing.

The whole Encyclical in a way restabilizes life by playing on the register of the universal, which is applicable to all men and in all circumstances. With regard to time, it does this in terms of the immutable which is not effected by history. But the exemplary character of Jesus introduces something which regards not the immutable, but the perennial. The perennial character of the example is not the same thing as the immutability of the norm. It leaves place for an apprenticeship of the moral life through contact with historical experience.

Beyond these few marginal remarks I would express some reservations on the notion of nature. There appear to me three uses of the term in the Encyclical. Sometimes it means rational nature; it is rationality which constitutes human nature, and which distinguishes us from the rest of the animals. Sometimes nature is used for the integrity of the person, for his dignity. Here, the encyclical reflects a personalist Schelerian side deriving from the formation of the Pope and integrated into his Thomism. Thirdly, at times the biological dimension of nature is advanced.

If one does not treat the notion of nature critically one risks playing alternately on these three different registers and confusing the levels. For example, one may draw support from the dignity



of the person or the universality of the human condition in order to justify a biologizing usage of the word "nature". Despite the denials by the Pope, I believe that this is what is happening in the area of sexual morality.

*Splendor Veritatis*, such is the title of the encyclical. But does not the beauty of truth shine more brightly than its rigor? We speak of the light not as an object of possession, but as that in which one exists. Most fundamentally, I hope to be *in* the truth; I hope also that, in a manner which I do not understand, one who disagrees with me also is *in* the truth. Such presence in the truth seems better honored by the metaphor of light and splendor, than by the notion of norm and law.



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