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**PROTEST AND ENGAGEMENT:
Philosophy after Apartheid at an
Historically Black South African
University**

South African Philosophical Studies, II

Edited by
Patrick Giddy

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Introduction: Philosophy and the Ghetto Mentality Patrick Giddy | 1 |
| Chapter I. Fanon and the Persistence of Humanism Richard Pithouse | 9 |
| Chapter II. The Personalist Philosophy of John Macmurray Gerard Mccabe | 35 |
| Chapter III. The Ethical Boundaries of Business: Questions of Integrity Pravasan Pillay | 47 |
| Chapter IV. Understanding the "Criminal" In an Unjust Society Refiloe Senatla | 59 |
| Chapter V. A Wrong Way: From Being Tt Having in the African Value System Symphorien Ntibagirirwa | 65 |
| Chatper VI. A Question Mark against Ubuntu: Comparisons with Russian Communitarians Olga Yurkivska | 83 |
| Chapter VII. Why We Need a New Ethic for the Environment Richard Sivil | 103 |
| Chapter VIII. Making Sense of Being in Disgrace Patrick Giddy | 117 |
| Chapter IX. The Nature and Role of Applied Ethics in the Public Sector Nkosinathi Owen Sotshangane | 131 |
| Index | 145 |

INTRODUCTION
PHILOSOPHY AND THE GHETTO MENTALITY:
A UNIVERSITY IN SERVICE OF STUDENTS FROM
DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS
PATRICK GIDDY

At the University of Durban-Westville, whose mission statement promises "to make university education accessible to all, especially to students who are financially and educationally disadvantaged", we have a discipline problem. The world of education, of rules of attendance, of assignments and impartial grading is not the world of the township.

In his 1998 study of student attitudes at our university, Jack Johnson-Hill asked students whether university studies could be seen as opening the gates to lifelong learning, rather than simply a hurdle to be jumped before getting to a job. The reply came that this was impossible since the institution at present was so alien to the external conditions of students' everyday lives.

Whether it was a matter of coordinating a feast to celebrate the bringing back to one's home of the spirit of a deceased grandparent, arranging a 'safe house' for a relative under attack, or contributing time and labour to a community development project, most students viewed their period at university as compartmentalised intervals in an otherwise dense web of community interactions and relationships. Because virtually all of these interactions represented involvements with blacks [i.e. Africans] only, the alienation from the university which they evoked was symbolic of racial alienation as well as of cultural alienation.(1998:54)

Given this condition of alienation, it becomes clear that the university is faced with one dimension of a much larger problem. For constructive engagement in the community of free citizens – the post-Apartheid ideal – requires education. It requires the necessarily slow but rewarding acquisition of habits of thinking and writing that are part and parcel of participation in the political debates. Given the nature of a society emerging from a very dysfunctional and divided past, this is not possible without a heavy emphasis on student-focussed education, with a large dose of the humanities. I will try to explain what I mean.

Modern political thought of the line from Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, to Mill and Bentham offers a series of discussions on the nature of the most suitable social arrangements for our society, maximizing individual freedom and the general contentment of the members of the society. Its context is the formation of the industrialized, urbanized, secular world that is our own context, too. It has been foundational in shaping our present global setup of liberal democracy. Our present task, it seems to me, would be to come to a critical evaluation of its shortcomings, so as to form ideas for the future. Without this prior engagement, any proposals – and the Marxist and neo-Marxist are the most obvious here – are likely to be globally unrealistic and in general unconvincing.

But before one can interest the student in this tradition, one must feel that the liberal democracy (and its universities) has something going for it, that one can identify to some extent at least with its general institutional arrangements for meeting people's needs and accommodating their ideals – property laws, educational structures, free market, and so on. We

have to begin with the problem of alienation, or more specifically the problem of the ghetto mentality, bred of the apartheid suburb/township divide. Many or most students seem not to feel at all confident that the university and its practices are "for them". Rather, they are seen as an obstacle course, a series of hurdles, that have somehow – it matters not how – to be negotiated in order to achieve the qualification and so an entry – not into the 'normal' world of middle-class society – but into the class of the privileged few who have power. "You've failed me," is the remark one often hears from a student, as if failure is an event which occurs without reference to objective standards at all. There is a misunderstanding of the nature of an academic discipline as a social practice.

In this situation, a discussion of the ghetto mentality is a good starting point for philosophy studies. A useful description is given in Joseph Pistone's account of his work as an undercover agent in the Mafia:

I grew up in a city, an Italian, knowing what the Mafia was. As a teenager I played cards, shot craps, played pool, went to the track, hung around the social clubs. . . I knew some guys who were mob guys. . . I knew some of them were killers. Even as a kid I knew guys that were here today, gone tomorrow, never seen again, and I knew what had happened. I knew how wiseguys acted. I knew the mentality. I knew things to do and not to do. Keep your mouth shut at certain times. Don't get involved in things that don't concern you. Walk away from conversations and situations that aren't your business, before anybody asks you to take a hike. You handle yourself right in those situations, that's how you get credibility on the street. They say to themselves, 'Hey, this guy's been around.' Growing up in that environment, I could have gone the wiseguy route. I knew guys that did. It happened that my mother and father were straight, and I grew up with their values. I grew up as a guy who would work for a living, raise a family, obey the laws. Other guys became badguys. (Pistone, 1987:114-5)

But there are moments of moral dilemma. One incident he relates:

I was out bouncing with Mirra and a couple other wiseguys and their girlfriends. About four in the morning we went for breakfast. Suddenly Mirra turns obnoxious with the waitress, bitching about cold eggs and bad service. He cranks it up, getting nastier, making a scene. Finally I say, 'Hey, Tony, it's not her fault, she's doing the best she can.' That sets him off worse. He leans across the table and says, . . . "You don't ever tell me what to say or not to say or how to act.' 'I don't mean to, Tony. I just thought maybe you could ease up on her.' Then he launches into a tirade in front of everybody. . . I had to shut up because it was only going to get worse and go totally out of control. So I say, 'Tony, you're right. I probably was out of line.' (1987:135-6)

What matters in this ghetto culture (the culture often associated with immigrant communities) is not the broader ethics of the society, but the narrower ethos of the group, where criminal activity, for example, might be acceptable. Ethics as commonly understood – a broad respect for persons – falls away under the higher demands of the group and getting and maintaining power in the group. The rules and practices of university life would similarly be viewed as fairly dispensable, judged as "other", unsuitable for "us".

Does township life encourage a ghetto mentality? Johnson-Hill explains why normal ethical absolutes could be bypassed:

This is because, living within a sea of poverty, racism and unemployment – where there are few job training facilities, and where crime and contact with criminals are everyday occurrences – the man with ‘style’ becomes ‘everything’. To have ‘style’ is to wear new clothes, to drive a good-looking car, to have girls and to look and act sharp. For the most part, the only persons most young people see, or come in face-to-face contact with, who have style are the pimps, gang leaders, robbers, car hijackers, drug pushers and warlords. The life of crime, although perceived as an extremely risky way of life, is thus considered by many unemployed black youth as the only available option, especially if one seeks to become somebody, because ‘without style you are nothing in the townships’. (1990:59)

Students seem in general to agree that there is something to the comparison drawn here. It would seem that there is a prerequisite for a serious engagement in a course of study on political theory, a kind of moral conversion. Something that students from the suburbs might never have to confront, during their university studies, in particular if these are in the sciences.

What these examples teach us is that there are certain ground rules for engaging in university study, and these are ethical matters. Philosophical discussion assumes a certain commitment to respecting persons as, at least, sources of argument. One way of understanding the subject matter of philosophy is, indeed, as the analysis of the capacity of persons to come to the truth (epistemology) and, to some extent, to act on it (ethics). Political philosophy, as I understand it, is the critical evaluation of beliefs about various alternative social arrangements. The idea that it is worthwhile spending time analyzing the coherence of such beliefs, examining the grounds for holding those beliefs to be true, the plausibility of the premises – all of which abstracts from the context of the role of those beliefs in securing and maintaining power in the group – is something that takes time to get used to.

The point here is that this problem seems largely unnoticed by present shapers of higher educational policy and absent from the minds of many university administrators. It is in the humanities that these crucial, de-alienating, steps will be taken, or not at all.

University teaching in South Africa has been transformed over the past few years so as to make its degrees more marketable under present global conditions. Every course (now modules, half semester or full semester) has had to be recast as a unit of a program, with outcomes related to identifiable marketable skills. Departments are no longer part of the teaching or administrative structure of the university, they are simply disciplines within the programs. In general, and in accordance with trends world-wide, this means a downsizing of the humanities. Our former department of philosophy is now a subdiscipline within a school of governance (alongside public administration and tourism) which, in turn, is part of the Faculty of Law and Commerce. Emphasis is on "through-rates", and students are quick to calculate where the through-rate is being escalated to meet the budgetary requirements (failures are penalized by withdrawal of state subsidies to the university).

This means that the notion of a discipline, that is to say, of a cooperative social practice with its autonomous standards of excellence, is under threat. Or at least, in present day South Africa it is a site of struggle. Academics are challenged to make the disciplines anew, make their impact felt under new conditions, and draw upon their rich history in a new way.

It would be unfortunate if the demise of Apartheid led to the demise of debate in South Africa. Under those stringent conditions of the apartheid regime, every bit of space allowed for debate was exploited to the full, and with enthusiasm and commitment. Under the new pressures of globalisation, with a popularly elected but undecided and wavering regime, we owe it to ourselves and our students to use the space still allowed for the renewed celebration of our intellectual heritage.

Not much reflection has been given to the coincidence, in the last decade of the twentieth century, of the fall of Soviet Communism and the collapse of Apartheid. But the triumph of liberal democracy (T.O.L.D., as in "I told you so") took away the most potent symbol of an alternative to the dominant Western model of the good life, that of atomistic and genderless individuals seeking to maximize their benefits. Whatever the actual merits, if any, of that particular alternative, we are faced now with the threat of a new, relentless, conformity which neutralizes debate. Disciplines, autonomous, engaged and each with their own history, are points of resistance.

The first Philosophy Seminar Series reflected in this work was held during April and May of 2001, and was to some extent interdisciplinary. The broad theme that emerged was that of philosophy as protest. This is appropriate to a university that draws its student body from the disadvantaged section of the community.

In the contributions from Pithouse and McCabe, we are introduced to thinkers who were aware of being out of the mainstream of philosophy. In his analysis of the humanism of Frantz Fanon, Richard Pithouse argues for a distinction between reactionary and revolutionary humanism. Fanon's revolutionary humanism, however, is built up through his critical dialogue with Sartre. Influenced by his medical and psychoanalytic studies, he presents a new, more embodied, view of the existentialist value of freedom. Touching on the controversial idea of a normative notion of human nature, Pithouse shows how, in Fanon's writings, a creative spirituality is evident, a poetry which engages the reader not only intellectually, but on a much deeper emotional level.

In a very different way, Gerard McCabe offers us, in his brief but evocative sketch of the philosophy of John MacMurray, a vision of personal community as an ethical ideal. For MacMurray, setting himself against the dominant Cartesian philosophical tradition, the subject is best understood as agent, and agency entails engagement rather than detachment as the defining characteristic of persons. Furthermore, such engagement intends personal community or friendship. The sustainability of such relations, MacMurray argues, is made possible through the empowering presence of God and is celebrated in religion.

There follow six aspects of protest against a dysfunctional and limiting social *status quo*. Pravasan Pillay argues that the world of business is set up so as to compromise the personal integrity of job seekers, who are required to submerge their sense of self, to put on a mask, for the purposes of the ends of the business. Refiloe Senatla questions the place of moral judgments in an unjust society, seeing in the action of Dostoevsky's character Raskolnikov, a protest against such injustice. She questions whether the sense of criminality here is not better seen, in spite of the author's intentions, as simply a failure of nerve on the part of Raskolnikov. Can criminality carry any stigma at all in such an unjustly structured society?

Ntibagirirwa questions the direction taken by popular culture in contemporary Africa. He argues that both Marxist and liberal (in particular, Kantian) approaches to social development are alien to the set of metaphysical beliefs characteristic of traditional African culture. They both stress having rather than being, property rather than the person. He asks whether virtue ethics,

placing goodness in aspects of character – in how one is, and not simply what one achieves or intends – might better serve to articulate the traditional African norm of *ubuntu*. In reply, Olga Yurkivska brings the thought of Leo Tolstoy to bear upon this question of *ubuntu* as an ethical ideal appropriate for a post-Apartheid society, and sees a danger in idealizing a way of life that is pre-industrial. She shows how this threatens when the ontological foundation of the dignity of the person and social order is reduced to a matter of pragmatic convenience and by implication the importance of bringing to light the deeper meaning of the cultural heritage which modern materialisms have attempted systematically to erase from common memory.

In the next two papers, contemporary attitudes to nature come under scrutiny. Richard Sivil takes up the protest against the largely unquestioned misuse of the environment in our society, the result of an anthropocentric and limiting orientation in our lives and behaviour. In my own contribution, I offer a critique of the idea of "disgrace", with reference to J.M. Coetzee's well known novel, and argue that it needs to be seen in the light of the suggestion (in *The Lives of Animals*) that there is a need to accord respect to nature, in particular animal life.

The last paper has been added to the work of the Seminar and is by Nkorinathi Sotshangane of the University of Transkei and in a positive manner attempts to identify the nature and principles of an applied ethics for service in the public sector.

There is a unity in these papers, but it is a unity of orientation, rather than of the content of the ideas. This is as it should be, philosophical traditions – Marxist, humanist, Thomist, anarchist, existential or analytic – should be subordinate and not dominant in healthy discussion. In this way, philosophy challenges any totalizing tendency in our emerging nations.

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CHAPTER I
FRANTZ FANON AND THE PERSISTENCE OF HUMANISM
RICHARD PITHOUSE

Many commentators still reduce Frantz Fanon to an "apostle of violence" on the basis of a few pages written in support of armed resistance to the extraordinarily violent French suppression of the Algerian independence movements. Others still attack Fanon for his work for the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) in the Algerian War of Independence. Nobody is interested when Marx or Mill or Hobbes conclude that violence is an appropriate response to certain circumstances. Sartre's support for the Resistance usually counts in his favour. But, evidently, quite a few people are still not ready for a black man with a gun or for meaningful challenges to European colonialism.

But it is also true that from the mountains of Mexico to the factory floors of South Africa and the prisons of the new American gulag, to the Professors of Columbia and Harvard Frantz Fanon's name is on more lips, and is being uttered more reverently, than ever before. It needs to be pointed out though that many who speak in his name have not read his work carefully or at all. He has become an icon of resistance whom all sorts of fantasies and prejudices have been projected. He is routinely misrepresented as everything from a black nationalist to some kind of postmodern literary theorist.

Nevertheless, it remains clear that for many people Fanon's increasingly popular work has a peculiarly transformative impact. Many people have testified that his words change lives. George Jackson's prison diary, *Soledad Brother*, is a classic in this regard and The Third Worldist journal, *Partisans*, spoke for many when its editors noted that "anyone who has . . . read those pages that blaze with lucidity, inevitably finds born in them a new vision of men and a burning desire to take the dimensions of this vision into the future." (Macey 2000:23) Sympathetic commentators, of the highest intellectual status, seem unable to resist metaphors of light when describing Fanon's work and life. Words like "brilliant", "radiant" "incandescent", and "luminescence" abound.

What is it that gives Fanon's work this extraordinary power; that makes it so inspirational and transformative for so many people? A few possibilities spring to mind. One is his subject matter. After all, many will find his vision of the redemption of the wretched of the earth and of a transcendence of the rigid categories and hierarchies of race to be welcome. In this world of massive and racialised inequality it comes as rain in a desert. But this cannot be the whole story as Fanon's work has inspired many struggles that have nothing to do with race or the Third World. It may also be that some of the power of his work resides in its eclecticism. Fanon's work is a mixture of philosophy, politics, psychology and sociology, it draws freely on Marx, Nietzsche, Jung, Lacan, Cesaire, Sartre and Hegel. Eclecticism can be a euphemism for a lack of rigour. But when, as in this case, the work draws on the best resources of a variety of disciplines to focus closely on a specific theme, it can be the road to unusually perceptive and resonant work.

However, while a method may be effective, it's unlikely to change lives in itself. Much of Fanon's capacity to inspire (and to redeem the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach) must lie in his style. His synthesis of logical analysis, polemic and poetry is extraordinarily passionate and beautiful. This was no accident. When Francis Jeanson, an editor on *Les Temps Modernes*, asked him to clarify a phrase that he had used in an article, he replied: "I cannot explain that phrase more

fully. I try, when I write such things, to touch the nerves of my reader. . . . That is to say, irrationally – almost sensually." (Ehlen: 103) But Fanon's ability to enlighten and to inspire action must lie in more than just the style in which he writes. This is made clear by the fact that many of his ideas have retained their extraordinary transformative power when used by less poetic and passionate writers like Steve Biko and Edward Said.

So what is the quality that animates Fanon's work and that of many of the other theorists of the New Left, like Victor Frankel, Eric Fromm and Paulo Freire? To be quite clear about what it was they called it humanism, which they took seriously. This paper will make the deeply unfashionable step of taking Fanon's humanism seriously, with the aim of fleshing it out and developing a tentative exploration of the nature of what I believe (but will not try to establish empirically) to be its extraordinarily transformative power and, therefore, value.

The paper begins by looking at the idea of humanism and, with reference to Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt draws a distinction between revolutionary and reactionary humanism. Still drawing on their work of Hardt and Negri, the chapter analyses the idea of immanence in Fanon's thought. It concludes by looking at three categories in Fanon's thought – existence, desire and interconnectedness, arguing that Fanon's protest against objectification offers a way forward that is in conscious distinction to Sartre's pessimism.

FANON'S DECLARATION OF HUMANISM

Fanon tells his readers, on the first page of his first book, *Black Skin White Masks*, that he writes "for a new humanism." (1967:7) He ends his last book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, written after exposure to the full barbarism of French colonialism as follows: "For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man." (1976: 255) His commitment to humanism is, explicit, constant and resolute.

Humanism was, for a long time, an idea with which radical thinkers were proud to be associated. In 1844 Marx was happy to write that "Communism . . . is humanism." (1983:149) and in 1945 Sartre gave his famous lecture "Existentialism is a humanism." (1987) Humanism still appealed to Biko in the early 1970s, but for the contemporary reader humanism is generally seen as, at best, a naive anachronism, and, at worst, dangerously repressive. Iris Murdoch's *Existentialists and Mystics* is a typical example of the former view. In the 546 pages that make up this collection of her essays, her only comment on humanism is that it is one of the "flimsier creeds" which is "unrealistic", "over optimistic", and a "purveyor of certain falsehoods." (1997:337) Ever since Michele Foucault heralded the death of Man, post-structuralist and postmodern thinkers have tended to present humanism as a key structure in the repressive apparatus of modernity. Humanism has become a deeply unfashionable idea. It is not surprising then that almost all commentators sympathetic to Fanon – with notable (and non-postmodernist) exceptions like the existentialist Lewis Gordon (1995) and the Jungian Michael Adams (1996) – have simply ignored the explicitly humanist nature of Fanon's thought as if it were an embarrassing anachronism. In this regard, it is interesting to note that in David Macey's recent 600 page study of Fanon, humanism is, typically, not even indexed. The majority of those theorists who do acknowledge Fanon's humanism quickly dismiss it as an anachronistic ideology complicit in repressive modernity and colonialism.

However, there are at least three reasons why we should defy current orthodoxy and take Fanon's humanism seriously when we engage his thought. The first is the simple point that

Fanon took his humanism very seriously, and that a serious engagement with his work must, in the interest of intellectual responsibility, do the same.

The second is that Fanon, and other anti-colonial thinkers like Steve Biko, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Memmi, were fully aware that humanism had been used as a legitimating ideology for colonialism. However, unlike the postmodernists they didn't see this as a reason for opposing humanism. Their view was that this was a perverted form of humanism as it objectified the bulk of humanity. Hence Sartre opened his preface to the *Wretched of the Earth* by arguing that: "Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred million men, and one thousand five hundred million natives." (1976:8) The anti-colonial humanists thought that the solution was to retain the idea of humanism but to expand it to include all of humanity. This explains Biko's passionate attachment to a 'true humanity'. It is interesting to note that just at the time that the formerly subjugated people of the Third World were, through the language of humanism, demanding their place in the world, the West decided that humanism must be abandoned. Its replacement with the postmodern cynicism about progress and emphasis on difference has been accompanied by an enormous setback in the progress of the Third World and active imposition of a rapacious neo-colonialism. Although humanism is rightly associated with Western hypocrisy, it must also be remembered that it fueled Third World resistance more effectively than any of the ideas that have come to replace it.

Finally, it is important to note that, very recently, a number of theorists have argued that it is a serious error to look at modernity and its legitimating philosophy, humanism as is usually done, in a reductive way. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri do this particularly well, and their work makes a useful starting point for an explanation of the strand of humanism to which Fanon was so passionately attached.

REVOLUTIONARY VERSUS REACTIONARY HUMANISM

Hardt and Negri argue that there are two opposing humanisms in modernity – one revolutionary and one reactionary. In their view, modernity began as a revolutionary movement in that 'the powers of creation that had previously been consigned exclusively to the heavens are now brought down to earth. This is the discovery of the fullness of the "plane of immanence."' (2000:73) Immanence, they argue, is radical and revolutionary in that it "develops knowledge and action as scientific experimentation and defines a tendency toward democratic politics, posing humanity and desire at the center of history." (2000:74)

They understand immanence to refer to the view that the powers of creation inhere in humanity and, more particularly, in the multitude rather than The People. They define the multitude as 'the universality of free and productive practices' and The People as "an organized particularity that defends established principles and properties." (2000:316) But it is perhaps more useful to note that they speak of the multitude in terms of a disordered collection of desiring subjectivities and the people in terms of an ordered collection of subjectivities disciplined in the name of some transcendent power above and beyond the individual desires in which creative powers are taken to inhere. That transcendent power may be God or the Gods, ethnicity, The Nation, The Market, The Leader, History, The Party and, of course, Europe or the West. Hardt and Negri are resolutely against transcendence when transcendence refers to a realm or agency outside the grasp – in time, space or capacity – of the multitude. They insist that "Immanence is defined as the absence of every external limit from the trajectories of the multitude, and immanence is tied only . . . to regimes of possibility." (2000:373)

They are committed to the revolutionary Renaissance idea of immanence precisely because it puts the powers of creation in the hand of the multitude and so they endorse, fully, the vision of human beings in a perpetual state of becoming with regard to their mode of being, mode of political organisation and material circumstances of existence. They do not use the word 'transcendence' to describe this overcoming of facticity, but endorse the possibility and value of this transcendence of facticity *on the plane of immanence*. i.e. changing the facts of the here and the now, by taking concrete action in the here and the now rather than denying or diminishing the significance of those facts. They celebrate immanence precisely because it leads to this type of transcendence.

However, Hardt and Negri argue that this revolutionary assertion of immanence was opposed by:

a counter revolution in the proper sense of that term: a cultural philosophical, social, and political initiative that, since it could neither return to the past nor destroy the new forces, sought to dominate and expropriate the force of the emerging movements and dynamics. This is the second mode of modernity, constructed to wage war against the new forces and establish an overarching power to dominate them. It arose within the Renaissance revolution to divert its direction, transplant the new image of humanity to a transcendent plane, relativise the capacities of science to transform the world, and above all oppose the reappropriation of power on the part of the multitude. The second mode of modernity poses a transcendent constituted power against an immanent constituent power, order against desire. (2000:74)

Hardt and Negri argue that Bruno, Duns Scotus and Spinoza were surpassed by Descartes, Hegel and Kant and so:

Victory went to the second mode and the forces of order that sought to neutralize the power of the revolution. Although it was not possible to go back to the way things were, it was nonetheless possible to reestablish ideologies of command and authority, and thus deploy a new transcendent power by playing on the anxiety and fear of the masses. (2000:75)

With regard to the poststructuralist critique of humanism they argue that: "Michael Foucault's final works on the history of sexuality bring to life once again that same revolutionary impulse that animated Renaissance humanism. The ethical care of the self reemerges as a constituent power of self-creation." (2000:91) In their view there is only an apparent paradox between Foucault's assertion of an anti-humanism and the clearly humanist content of his later work. They argue that:

Antihumanism follows directly on Renaissance humanism's secularizing project, or more precisely, its discovery of the plane of immanence. Both projects are founded on an attack on transcendence. There is a strict continuity between the religious thought that accords a power above nature to God and the modern 'secular' thought that accords the same power above nature to Man. The transcendence of God is simply transformed to Man. Like God before it, this Man that stands separate from and above nature has no place in a philosophy of immanence. Like God, too, this transcendent figure of Man leads

quickly to the imposition of social hierarchy and domination. Antihumanism, then, conceived as a refusal of any transcendence, should in no way be confused with a negation of the *vis viva*, the creative life force that animates the revolutionary stream of the modern tradition. On the contrary, the refusal of transcendence is the condition of possibility of thinking this immanent power, an anarchic basis of philosophy. (2000: 91-92)

Heidegger's response to Sartre's *Existentialism Is a Humanism* is often taken to have been a key influence in the anti-humanism of recent French thought – Foucault, Lacan, Derrida etc. Indeed often it is claimed casually that Heidegger developed the definitive refutation of humanism. As Dermot Moran explains, "Humanisms remain metaphysical concepts whereas Heidegger wants a thinking which is a thinking of Being. Being appears through humankind, humankind is the 'shepherd of Being' and 'language is the house of Being'." (2000:216) It seems clear that Heidegger's critique of humanism is a critique of a specific type of humanism – the type which Hardt and Negri identify as reactionary and explain as the replacement of the transcendence of God with the transcendence of Man. So, although Heidegger's anti-humanism has been very influential, it does not require a response here beyond pointing out that his critique was of the strain of humanism identified by Hardt and Negri as reactionary.

In their view, modernity developed two humanisms. The first was the revolutionary assertion that human beings exist in the plane of immanence and the second was the reactionary assertion of a new transcendence in the form of Man. (And of course, as Fanon points out, Man is European Man.) If we reflect a little deeper than Hardt and Negri, it is clear that the revolutionary form of humanism understands human beings as having the potential to awaken and use, freely, their creative energies to engage with and change the material and symbolic realities of the world in which they found themselves. In this vision humanity is seen as: (1) free and responsible for the exercise of that freedom in the existentialist sense of being condemned to respond freely to facticity, (2) capable of self creation in the sense of, in Nietzsche's phrase, being in a perpetual state of becoming, and (3) capable of changing the material and symbolic world. Moreover, a high value is ascribed to these three human capacities, and actions which allow for their *universal* flourishing are taken to be good while actions which inhibit them are taken to be bad. There is a connection between revolutionary humanism and a whole range of philosophies which emphasize human development, freedom and creative engagement with the world, like Jungian psychology, existentialism and *ubuntu*. Politically it has direct connections with the such theories of liberation as classical liberalism, anarchism, Marx's earlier humanist writing, Mikhail Bakunin's vision of a society in which "every human being should have the material and moral means to develop all of his humanity" (1953:295); Marx's vision of a society in which "the free development of one is the condition of the free development of all" (1983:197), and John Stuart Mill's view that "Liberty consists in doing what one desires" and that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted...in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection." (1976:72-73) The best known contemporary defender of revolutionary humanism is probably Noam Chomsky who, although he defines his position as anarchist, celebrates John Dewey's vision of a society "of free human beings associated with one another on terms of equality." (1996:75)

Both humanisms are often, but not necessarily, atheistic, but they always reject the idea that human beings can find meaning in a transcendent, external God. However, the reactionary strain of humanism employs two secular strategies to fix and control humanity – to turn a multitude

into a people. The first is to project the powers of creation on to some transcendent realm or agent (Europe, the Nation, the Leader, History, the Party, the Market, etc). The second is to present, in the name of humanism, one particular mode of being as the normal, highest or best mode of being. This is, in and by itself, repressive. Moreover, because the particular mode of being presented as normal or ideal is often in the direct interests of the powerful, the reactionary strain of humanism tends to be an oppressive ideology, for example, when the idea of humanity is reduced to European Man.

There is, clearly, a profound difference between the enabling and expansive approach of recognising and encouraging the fractious, anarchic energies of the multitude and the normalising and restrictive approach of reifying one image of an ideal humanity into 'Man'. The view that (European) Man is anti-human is the pivot on which Fanon's entire project turns, and I will take it up shortly. But first I will make some brief remarks on the relationship between Fanon's immanence and his humanism.

FANON'S COMMITMENT TO IMMANENCE

Fanon's restless intelligence ranges over the plane of pure immanence. His philosophy is never distracted from an engagement with the material realities of the here and now. Fanon prescribes a "voracious taste for the concrete" (1976:74). He begins *Black Skin White Masks* by telling his readers that: "I do not come with timeless truths. My consciousness is not illuminated with ultimate radiances" (1967:7). He ends *The Wretched of the Earth* by insisting that "If we wish to live up to our people's expectations, we must seek the response elsewhere than in Europe." (1976:254)

Throughout the whole corpus of his work, he never once waivers from his commitment to the immediate – to the phenomena that can be discerned in the here and now from a particular, embodied, position. Marx began, in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, by insisting that "We proceed from an economic fact of the present" (1983:107), but ended up replacing a transcendent God with transcendent History. Unlike many on the left, Fanon never gives in to the temptation to ground and solidify his secular humanism by turning history into History. He is scrupulous in his rejection of all mechanistic explanations of human behaviour. Early in *Black Skin White Masks* he wrote that he "turns (his) . . . back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism." (1967:23) In the case of historicism he argues that: "It is rigorously true that decolonization is proceeding, but it is rigorously false to pretend and to believe that this decolonization is the fruit of an objective dialectic which more or less rapidly assumes the appearance of an absolutely inevitable mechanism." (1965:170)

There is no necessary connection between immanence and humanism. Revolutionary humanism must be a philosophy of immanence, but the plane of immanence can also accommodate naturalistic and instrumental thinking. Consequently, it is important to point out that Fanon's immanence is consciously and resolutely *humanist*.

The standard definition of "immanence" is that the word refers to 'the pervasion of the universe by the intelligent and creative principle, a fundamental conception of Pantheism.' (Chambers Dictionary:309) This definition can, and often has been understood as a vision in which human beings are just another part of nature. This is problematic for a humanist, who, by definition, places a particular value on the human. What's more, some neo-pantheists have gone even further and perverted immanence into an anti-human fetish of the non-human – i.e. "nature". The Unabomber and the Anarchist communities in Eugene, Oregon are good examples

of neo-panteists who see the bulk of humanity as fallen and corrupt and seek to defend nature at the expense of humanity. A thinker with a humanistic commitment to immanence must oppose this. It is not necessary to go as far as Nietzsche who argues that "Nothing is beautiful, only man . . . nothing is ugly, but degenerate man." (1977:145) But the humanist must, at least, agree with Sophocles that "Marvels are many, but man is greatest." This does not require an exploitative instrumentalisation of nature. On the contrary, because humanity is part of nature and, therefore, inseparable from, and dependent on nature, the cavalier exploitation of nature must be considered anti-human. It is possible to achieve some balance in this regard, by understanding that nature is fragile but valuable to and for humans. Something of this spirit is captured in a rather mystic or poetic form by Hardt and Negri in the concluding paragraph of *Empire*, which has been hailed as the new *Communist Manifesto*. They write of Saint Francis of Assisi who:

in opposition to nascent capitalism refused every instrumental discipline, and in opposition to the mortification of the flesh (in poverty and in the constituted order), he posed a joyous life, including all of being and nature, the animals, sister moon, brother sun, the birds of the field, the poor and exploited humans, together against the will of power and corruption. (2000:413)

Neither the moon nor the sun nor the birds of the fields can be for or against anything. The sun and the moon are, of course, objects, and, while birds have a limited level of consciousness, they simply are – they have no power to reflect on their being. So, clearly, Francis of Assisi, very much like William Blake, Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda, is proposing a mode of being that ascribes value to nature *for* and *through* human consciousness.

Fanon does not acknowledge the dangers for humanity of the modern tendency, both Marxist and capitalist, to take an exploitative instrumentalist approach to nature. He may have ignored this because environmental degradation was not an obvious crisis at the time of writing, because his vocation was to speak and act against the immediate and massive human suffering induced by the barbarism of colonialism, or because he wished consciously to stress humanity at the expense of the natural environment in order to counter the racist discourse which naturalizes Africans. Fanon was acutely aware of this form of racism and wrote that: "The Algerians, the veiled women, the palm trees, and the camels make up the landscape, the natural background to the human presence of the French." (1976:84) The explicitly humanist vision which he offers in opposition to that is "There are houses to be built, schools to be opened, roads to be laid out, slums to be torn down, cities to be made to spring from the earth, men and women and children to be adorned with smiles. This means that there is work to be done over there, human work." (1967b:6) But there is nothing in his thought that militates against care for nature in order to enhance the well being of humans. On the contrary Fanon, like Marx, would probably look forward to an order where "nature has lost its mere utility in the sense that its use has become human use." (Eagleton 1997:23) He would also agree with Marx that "that man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature." (1983:112)

It is also important to point out that thinking may be on the plane of immanence without being egalitarian. Nietzsche's contempt for the herd is a paradigmatic philosophical example. For Nietzsche the plane of immanence is the plane of the real, but only the *ubermensch* can live there because it requires that the individual 'set up his *own* ideal and derive from it his law, his joys and his rights." (1977:177-178) But through their cowardice the majority are destined to remain

the slaves of those who preach 'submission and acquiescence and prudence and diligence and consideration and the long *etcetera* of petty virtues.'" (1977:243) In Nietzsche's view this is inevitable – it would be foolish to expect more than a few souls to live without the comfort of a transcendent power, and the herd, those who have failed, are unworthy of respect. Indeed, in his view, any attempt at egalitarianism is not only destined to fail but also dangerous because it will rein in the bold spirits and "It is the strongest and most evil spirits who have up till now advanced mankind the most." (1977:97)

Fanon does not romanticize the multitude. On the contrary, he argues that it often requires a tremendous effort to rouse the masses from their lethargy and tendency to objectify and, therefore, deny the humanity of both the self and the other. But he retains a respect for all humanity and is convinced that every human being, no matter how wretched, carries the potential to be a self-actualising and authentic being. His thought is not egalitarian in the sense of aspiring to conformity, but Fanon certainly does share Marx's vision of a society in which everyone has, equally, the opportunity to develop oneself freely. He presents any denial of the humanity of the self or the other as a serious moral failing:

All the problems which man faces on the subject of man can be reduced to this one question: 'Have I not, because of what I have done or failed to do, contributed to an impoverishment of human reality?' The question could also be formulated in this way: 'Have I at all times demanded and brought out the man that is in me?' (1967:34)

In some ways Fanon's thought is best understood as a synthesis of the Nietzschean valorization on the plane of immanence of the immanence, to be and the Marxist vision of universal flourishing.

Fanon's assertion of immanence is not, as in Zen Buddhism, simply a question of being fully present in, and thus being able to value the moment. It is not a mere defense of the quotidian and the concrete against the abstract and the transcendent. Fanon's immanence is rigorously and passionately humanist. At every point he speaks for the creative power of the multitude and against the forces of reaction that seek to appropriate that power. His project is political and retains the extraordinary moral power that comes from a vocabulary that allows the words human and inhuman to be used as adjectives in the political sphere. Three aspects of his humanism are immediately clear. The first is that his views are existentialist in that he sees humanity as confronted by the problematic of freedom and responsibility. The second is that he sees humans in terms of desire. Like the early humanist Marx and a variety of other schools of thought, including Bakunin's anarchism, Fanon sees humans as carriers of the potential to develop their agency and creativity. Thirdly, like Heidegger and many non-Western schools of thought – including the Eastern philosophies which influenced Heidegger – Fanon sees humans as interconnected rather than as the atomistic units of English liberal philosophy. I will discuss these three points in turn.

FANON'S EXISTENTIALISM

Fanon's thought is clearly existentialist in that he shares, with other existentialist thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre, a belief that the human condition is to be free – in the sense that existence precedes essence – and to be fully responsible for the exercise of that freedom. The nature of that freedom lies in the capacity to choose and to act – to create within the context of the unchosen

facts in response to which we negotiate our lives – facticity in existential discourse. So, for example, Fanon insists that: ‘the body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation.’ (1967:231) Denial of that freedom is considered to be self-deception – bad faith – and is, clearly, considered as an ethical failure by Fanon. So, for example, he argues that “Every one of my acts commits me as a man. Everyone of my silences, every one of my cowardices reveals me as a man.” (1967:88-89) Two of the more important examples of bad faith mentioned by Fanon are denial of the embodied nature of existence and denial of the humanity of the Other. The embodied nature of existence is obviously important in the context of racism. And, indeed, Fanon, in the chapter from *Black Skin White Masks* titled *The Fact of Blackness* reproached Sartre on the grounds that: “Jean-Paul Sartre had forgotten that the Negro suffers in his body quite differently from the white man.” (1967:138) In the context of anti-black racism, blackness becomes a stark reality in the social world. To deny it is bad faith.

It is also vitally important in the context of the bodily needs that must be met if the body is to survive and be healthy and so allow consciousness to survive and flourish. So, while it is important to recognise that a man in prison is free to choose how to respond to the fact of his imprisonment, it is also important to acknowledge that human beings are not pure consciousness and that, therefore, a full understanding of freedom must include some recognition of the needs of the body. There is a clear recognition of this throughout Fanon’s work – from *Black Skin White Masks* through to *The Wretched of the Earth*. He takes somatic well-being very seriously. But the recognition of the importance of embodiment does not mean that the body is always prior to consciousness in value. Clearly, consciousness cannot survive without the body, but Biko, who would be considered a hero in existentialist terms, put his body on the line to defend the integrity of his consciousness.

There is also an important connection between embodiment and the other. As Lewis Gordon explains: “The human being is at least three perspectives of embodiment: the perspective from a standpoint in the world; the perspective seen from other standpoints in the world; and the human being is a perspective that is aware of itself being seen from other standpoints in the world.” (1995:19) For Fanon it is imperative that human beings recognise not only themselves but also each other as human – as agents who are free/responsible and expansive rather than as objects who are determined/not responsible and contained. “I do battle” he says “for the creation of a human world – that is, of a world reciprocal of recognition.” (1967:219) Fanon’s central concerns – a desire to avoid bad faith in general and a particular desire to avoid the objectification of human beings – leads to a short but clear statement of his basic (existential humanist) ethical position: “I have one right alone: That of demanding human behaviour from the other. One duty alone: that of not renouncing my freedom through my choices.” (1967:229) So, for Fanon freedom and responsibility are not just an ethical neutral description of the human condition. They are also a positive ethical position. It is an ethics which takes truth as fundamental, not received truth or any form of doxa, but rather truth as an honest examination of one’s self and the world. For Fanon the humanity of man is the truth and so inhumanity must either be founded on conscious lies, a failure to face up to the truth or sheer, conscious contempt for humanity. But, because even in the latter case contempt for humanity will often mask itself, an inhuman society is a society in which “everyday reality is a tissue of lies, of cowardice, of contempt for man.” (1967 b:52)

This commitment to truth is not the reactionary humanism that presents some normalising orthodoxy/ideology as the essence of what it is to be human. This is a humanism that returns to the truth of the experiences of individual human beings – to immanence.

FANON AND DESIRE

Fanon insisted that "Man is a *Yes* or vibrates to cosmic harmonies" (1967:8) and reported that he "came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world." (1967:109) His rejection of instrumentalism and mechanistic explanations appears to be grounded in the view that to be human is not just to be free and responsible for the exercise of that freedom- but also to want – to desire. Existentialism is founded on the view that existence precedes essence, and so this idea that to be human is to desire may seem to be at odds with existentialism – to be an example of bad faith or the spirit of seriousness which Sartre explains as follows: "Marx proposed the original dogma of the serious when he asserted the priority of object over subject. Man is serious when he takes himself for an object." (1992:741) But, I will argue, Fanon's assertion that the human being desires is not afflicted with the spirit of seriousness.

One of the key differences between the thought of Fanon and Sartre is that Fanon's primary concern is with being-in-itself rather than being-for-itself and so, consequently, he is interested in desire more than absurdity. This means that there is a very different tone in the work of the two existentialists. Consider, for example, the difference in tone between *Nausea* and *Black Skin White Masks*. Both are existentialist and phenomenological accounts of a disintegrating psyche. But the difference in the words which Sartre has Roquentin say at the end of *Nausea* and the words with which Fanon concludes *Black Skin White Masks* is instructive. Roquentin says, rather blandly and pessimistically, "A time would come when the book would be written, when it would be behind me, and I think that a little of its radiance would fall upon my past. Then perhaps through it I could remember my life without repugnance." (1959:238) But Fanon's statement is full of passionate and hopeful commitment: "As a man I undertake to face the possibility of annihilation in order that two or three truths may cast their eternal brilliance over the world." (1967:228) This dramatic difference in tone can be partially understood in terms of Fanon's observation that "*Being and Nothingness* describes an alienated consciousness." (1967:138). Fanon's work, on the other hand, is about the collision between an integrated consciousness and an alienating society.

In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre's vision of abandonment, meaningless and absurdity is bleak. He argues that: "consciousness absolutely can not derive being from anything, either from another being or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Uncreated, without reason for being, being-in-itself is *de trop* for eternity." (1992:29) Sartre even goes so far as to argue that it makes no difference whether one gets drunk by oneself or leads nations because "Man is a useless passion." (1992:784) Fanon, on the other hand says things like:

Human reality in-itself-for-itself can be achieved only through conflict and through the risk that conflict implies. The risk means that I go beyond life towards a supreme good that is the transformation of subjective certainty of my own worth into a universally valid objective truth. As soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. (1967:219)

If Fanon had a patient like Antoine Roquentin, he would probably have considered the patient to be profoundly alienated. His therapy for Roquentin may, we can speculate, have aimed to divine, behind the passive apprehension of absurdity and meaninglessness, "a fundamental

aspiration to dignity." (1967b:53) He may, perhaps, have proceeded by encouraging Roquentin to reflect on why he is attracted to his favourite record – *Some of These Days*.

Sartre does himself hint that Roquentin may be able to find some redemption by exploring what desire he does experience. And in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre insists that desire is fundamental to humanity:

Fundamentally man is the *desire to be*, and the existence of this desire is not to be established by an empirical deduction; it is the result of an *a priori* description of the being of the for-itself, since desire is a lack and since the for-itself is the being which is to itself its own lack of being. The original project which is expressed in each of our empirically observable tendencies is then the project of being; or, if you prefer, each empirical tendency exists with the original project of being, in a relation of expression and symbolic satisfaction just as conscious drives, with Freud, exist in relation to the complex and to the original libido.(1992:722)

He goes so far as to promise that: "Existential psychoanalysis is going to reveal to man the real goal of his pursuit, which is being as a synthetic fusion of the in-itself with the for-itself; existential psychoanalysis is going to acquaint man with his passion." (1992:797) But in general Sartre's vision is fairly bleak. He seems to indicate that Roquentin can hope for a life a little more immediate and passionate. Nowhere does Sartre speak, as does Fanon, of meaningful redemption.

Indeed, Sartre generally presents desire as the project in which man seeks to be "the foundation of its own being-in-itself by the pure consciousness which it would have of itself." (1992: 723 – 724) And, he explains, the best way to understand this desire is to say that "man is the being whose project is to be God." (1992:724) So for Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, to be human is to be driven by a fundamental but unrealisable desire. This is not Fanon's view.

Sartre pays 'special attention to moments of vertigo, anxiety, and nausea." (Moran:362). There is some value to this because, as Heidegger stresses, we are more able to be authentic when we have been jolted out of our quotidian comfort. So it is not surprising that Fanon also pays special attention to glimpses of the void – although he is primarily concerned with alienation caused by racist objectification. But, unlike Sartre, he pays equal attention to moments of coalescence, transcendence, solidity etc. He is very clear that the desire to integrate one's consciousness is often frustrated. Consider the concluding lines to *The Fact of Blackness* – the chapter in *Black Skin White Masks* in which Fanon describes various strategies of defending the ego against racism: "Yesterday, awakening to the world, I saw the sky turn upon itself utterly and wholly. I wanted to rise but the disemboweled silence fell back upon me, its wings paralyzed. Without responsibility, straddling Nothingness and Infinity, I began to weep." (1967:140)

But even here he never abandons his passion: "I feel in myself a soul as immense as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest of rivers." (1967:140) Indeed, there can be no weeping without desire. And in *Black Skin White Masks* Fanon anticipates that desire can be redeemed from alienation by revolutionary struggle. He quotes Cessaire:

Start something!
Start what?

The only thing in the world that's worth the effort of starting: The end of the world, By God!" (1967:96)

In all of his following three books the authentic militant is demonstrated to be a reality.

So what is the nature of this desire that has no name but which, when it is confronted by forces which seek to deny it via objectification, can find redemption in revolutionary praxis – this desire which seems to be indestructible – this desire which gives Fanon's philosophy more life and optimism than Sartre's philosophy? It is clear that Fanon writes to inspire and make space for the full flowering of the creative powers of the multitude in the plane of immanence. As has been mentioned before, he writes in the introduction to *Black Skin White Masks* that "Man is a *yes* that vibrates to cosmic harmonies." (1967:8) Later on, towards the end of the book, he writes: "I said in my introduction that man is a *yes*. I will never stop reiterating that. *Yes* to life. *Yes* to love. *Yes* to generosity. But man is also a *no*. *No* to scorn of man. *No* to degradation of man. *No* the exploitation of man. *No* to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom." (1967:222) In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre argues, with echoes of Hegel, that consciousness "constitutes itself in its own flesh as nihilation of a possibility which another human reality projects as *its* possibility. For that reason it must arise in the world as a *No*; it is as a *No* that the slave first apprehends the master, or that the prisoner who is trying to escape sees the guard who is watching him." (1992:86-87) Fanon, whose work and life fused into a statement of radical rebellion against racism and colonialism, said "No" in the most profound ways. But for Fanon "No" follows "yes". The prisoner must say "yes" to freedom before saying "no" to the master and Fanon is careful to explain the "yes" that becomes the source of the "no" and that without the "yes" there would simply be resignation. He explains that: "I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects." (1967:109) And the crushing of this "yes", presented in the quote below as desire, leads to a resolute rejection of oppression – a firm, revolutionary, "No".

As soon as I *desire* I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity insofar as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world – that is, of a world of reciprocal recognitions. He who is reluctant to recognize me opposes me. In a savage struggle I am willing to accept convulsions of death, invincible dissolution, but also the possibility of the impossible. (1967:218)

This desire is clearly a desire to be recognised as a person and not an object. But Fanon's defense of desire is also, crucially, an assertion of the value of bringing one's creative powers to bear on the world. Fanon's work, especially in *The Wretched of the Earth*, makes use of a whole range of metaphors to describe progress. They include, in descending order of frequency, metaphors of movement, growth, waking up, new vision, rebirth and renewal. Fanon's protest is grounded on "Yes" – Yes to human flourishing.

This is predicated on the view that the human being is possessed with a desire and a capacity to engage with the world. This is, therefore, a theory of human nature. But human nature is a notoriously difficult terrain. In philosophy and psychology, theories of human nature multiply and develop continually. Even amongst those that, for example, assume a fundamental drive

there is a wide variety including Nietzsche's will-to-power; Freud's will-to-pleasure; Frankl's will-to-meaning; Jung's will-to-integration; Hegel's will-to-recognition etc, etc. They all have some explanatory power, and they all make particular sense in certain situations or with certain individuals, but equally they are all limited.

There are also many traditional visions of a fundamental life force. In India the creative energy or life force is referred to as *asprana*. In China and parts of West Africa it is known as *Chi*. Modernity's mechanistic secularism denied it in Europe, but Jung recognised it and called it the *libido*. Here in Southern Africa it is referred to as *Ntu*. Fanon does not tell us whether he sees these words used to describe the creative energies as metaphors or as nouns. He just asks, "What use are reflections on Bantu ontology when striking black miners in South Africa are being shot down?" (1967: 85) But the question is consistent. Desire lives in action, which ontology is abstract and possibly objectifying. Therefore, he chooses desire and denies, metaphysics.

Each theory about the fundamental drives that constitute human beings, if taken as the sole truth about humanity, can be limiting and even oppressive. Unsurprisingly it has become very fashionable to seek an easy way out of this problem and to deny that there is a human nature. But to deny human nature is to make a substantive claim about human nature. It is a claim with a long history which John Locke called *tabula rasa*. If we accept that to deny human nature is to assert something substantive about human nature then there is no escape from this challenge. The only way to make some sense of the paradox is to make an assertion about what it is to be a human being that is specific enough to be useful and general enough to avoid being reductive. Fanon achieves this balance with his view that to be human is to desire to be recognised as a free and responsible agent and to seek to change the world through creative engagement with it. It is the second point which makes his philosophy more positive than Sartre's.

FANON'S BELIEF IN THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF HUMANITY

Fanon's commitment to freedom feeds into an ethic of virtue, that is, of desire which generates a project of individual and collective self-creation. But he does not see this in terms of the radical individualism of the early Sartre. On the contrary he argues, in a more Heideggerian spirit that: "In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it." (1967:229) But Fanon sees Being in far larger terms than Heidegger's ethnic parochialism and insists that: 'there are in every part men who search. I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence.' (1967:229)

Fanon's first expression of the interconnectedness of humanity is in the first chapter of *Black Skin White Masks* where he shows that "to speak . . . means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (1967:17), because 'to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture.' (1967:18) He also gives a clear and persuasive endorsement of Jung's idea of the collective unconsciousness. Fanon defines it as "purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths and collective attitudes of a given group." (1967:188) It is, perhaps, necessary to point out that Fanon rejects the view that the collective unconsciousness is inherited (genetic) and insists that it is purely cultural and that it can and will continue to change and develop. It is important also to point out that Fanon clearly thought that the contents of the collective unconscious should and could be made conscious. He also shows that the symbolic order which structures the collective unconscious extends far beyond the boundaries of language. He is, for

example, able to speak of the collective unconscious of Europe as a whole. The "cosmic harmonies" which Fanon refers to when he writes that man is a yes are not explained. But Fanon does refer, further on in *Black Skin White Masks* to the "cosmic Jung" (1967:151), and it seems fair to guess that he uses the phrase "cosmic harmonies" to refer to the universal archetypes through which we experience our particular desire. We grow from a collective consciousness, live in it and, if we have the courage and vision, challenge it and extend it. But we are always part of it.

Fanon's view of humanity as interconnectedness is taken still further by his existentialist commitment to freedom and responsibility. Responsibility has no borders and so he argues that "I cannot disassociate myself from the future that is proposed for my brother. Every one of my acts commits me as man. Every one of my silences, every one of my cowardices reveals me as a man." (1967:89) He quotes, approvingly, Karl Jasper's view:

There exists among men, because they are men, a solidarity through which each shares responsibility for every injustice and every wrong committed in the world, and especially for crimes that are committed in his presence or of which he cannot be ignorant. If I do not do whatever I can to prevent them, I am an accomplice in them. (1967:89)

Fanon comments that:

Jaspers declares that this obligation stems from God. It is easy to see that God has no business here, unless one choose not to state the obligation as the explicit human reality of feeling oneself responsible for one's fellow man: responsible in the sense that the least of my actions involves all of mankind. When I express a specific manner in which my being can rise above itself, I am affirming the worth of my action for others. Conversely, the passivity that is to be seen in troubled periods of history is to be interpreted as default on that obligation . . . every European has equally to answer for the crimes perpetrated by Nazi savagery. (1967:89)

This degree of responsibility, and, therefore, of human connectedness, is often denied, but the human capacity to act and to change the world is a fact. The use or failure to use that capacity to oppose oppression is also a fact, and so Jaspers is clearly correct – even if this knowledge makes us uncomfortable. But the long reach of our responsibility is not just a crushing obligation to people whom we may never have even met – for instance, Indonesian workers whom a South African has never met. As Terry Eagleton explains in the context of Marxism, "In developing my own individual personality through fashioning a world, I am also realizing what it is that I have most deeply in common with others, so that the individual and species being are ultimately one." (1997:27)

FANON'S SPIRITUALITY

Fanon writes like a religious mystic. This could be dismissed as merely a question of style which has no significance to the content of his work. But I would argue that it is a fundamental part of his rebellion against objectification – material and symbolic. The religiousness of his work is vital to his project in that it is part of the reason why his work, unlike that of so many dry positivist philosophers, has been able to move and inspire so many people. It is no accident that

people routinely refer to *Black Skin White Masks* or *The Wretched of the Earth* as "my bible" or "our bible."

The religious tone of his work allows him to retain a sense of the sacred via the religious mode of apprehension best described as awe or reverence. A sense of the sacred can be reactionary, but when, as with Fanon, it is located in a neo-pantheistic manner in the creative powers of the multitude, rather than in any abstraction or transcendent realm, it is revolutionary. This is the source of the love about which even the most battle-scarred of revolutionaries can speak with no shame.

This reverence for the creative powers of the multitude does not mean that Fanon accepts things as they are or that he thinks that progress is easy. "Consciousness" he suggests "is a process of transcendence" and 'This transcendence is haunted by the problems of love and understanding. (1967:7) Hardt and Negri are not alone in understanding (revolutionary) humanism as a secular and, indeed, anti-religious philosophy. Yet as an intellectual ancestor they present Spinoza, a pantheist who sought to remove the sacred from the distant heavens and rediscover it in the here and now. And, of course, the word immanence has, in itself, religious connotations in that it usually refers to pantheism. Pantheism is often, like Buddhism, characterised as a form of religious atheism but, as the leading Spinoza scholar, Anthony Quinton, writes, "We must admit that in the emotional economy of human life as a whole these attitudes are genuinely religious, even if they are directed towards objects which are not the familiar objects of religious attitudes in our culture." (Magee 1988:107)

It is interesting to note that while orthodox religion has often been presented as the great enemy of immanence many, and probably most of the popular, and therefore effective, prophets of humanistic immanence have had a religious aspect to their thought. Poets like William Blake and Walt Whitman and musicians like Woody Guthrie, Bob Marley and Bruce Springsteen have all, despite their hostility to orthodox religion, been possessed of a certain religiousness. For example, Bob Marley's deep spirituality and commitment to Rastafari didn't stop him from singing an anthem of immanence against transcendent religion in *Get Up, Stand Up*:

Most people think
Great God will come down from the sky
Take away everything
And make everybody feel high
But if you know what life is worth
You will look for yours right here on earth
So Get Up Stand Up
Stand up for your rights

So it seems that immanence can be rooted in, or opposed, by a religious sensibility. On the other hand, it is clear that neither atheism nor secularism guarantee respect for humanity. On the contrary, secular ideologies, particularly those based on historicism (be they in the name of Communism, Development or The Market) and Herbert Spencer-style perversions of Darwinism, have legitimated such most appallingly anti-human actions as genocide, slavery, colonialism and gross exploitation. The well established critique of (secular) instrumental reason is fully endorsed by Fanon. He tells his readers that: "I turn my back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism" and insists that "It is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate the cycle for my freedom." (1967:230)

Marx was explicitly anti-religion. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, he argued that ‘the more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself’ (1983:134) and anticipated a society which will allow ‘the return of man from religion, the family, the state, etc. to “his human, i.e. social, life.” (1983:151) His work shows no sign of the Nietzschean fear that atheism will necessarily lead to a destructive nihilism, but he is careful to point out that atheism is, in and by itself, no guarantee of social progress. He saw no necessary connection between atheism and humanism and argued that “Communism begins where atheism begins . . . but, atheism is at the outset still far from being communism; indeed it is still for the most part an abstraction.” (1983:151)

So, the obvious question which arises in an age of increasing secularism is how can atheism or agnosticism be developed into an immanent humanism? How can the temptation to create a new transcendence be avoided? How can instrumentalism be avoided – i.e. how can a society, where every human being is an end, be created?

Marx’s early thought, which usually is characterised as humanist is, clearly a philosophy of humanistic immanence. In the conclusion to *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon quotes a passage from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* which is an excellent statement of Marx’s immanence:

The social revolution . . . cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions have to let the dead bury the dead. Before, the expression exceeded the content; now, the content exceeds the expression. (1967:223)

And, of course, the *Theses on Feuerbach* is an attack on secular thought which “raises itself above itself and establishes for itself an independent realm in the clouds” and a defense of “revolutionary practice” as “practical, human-sensuous activity.” (1983:156) But Marx felt the need to prove the validity of his ethics. He did so by denying ethics and claiming that he was a scientist. And his followers, from Engels in his eulogy at Marx’s funeral, to bureaucrats of the Soviet Union believed that: “Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history.” (1983:68)

But, although Marx claimed to be a scientist, his later thought clearly is, infected with the transcendent categories of orthodox Christian thought, to which Marx had been passionately attached as a teenager. Marx himself became the bearded prophet and turned the proletariat into Jesus; class struggle into the Holy Spirit; the bourgeoisie into Satan; history into the unfolding of God’s will and Communism into Heaven. Marx’s attempt to legitimate his humanist concerns with a new transcendence undermined, profoundly, his commitment to both humanism and immanence.

In his own lifetime Marx’s claims to have discovered a transcendent science was opposed by the anarchist Michael Bakunin. Bakunin spoke, very specifically, against morality which is ‘transcendent, super-human and therefore anti-human.’ (1953:139) Fanon never falls into Marx’s trap. He never abandons his commitment to immanence. He never seeks some transcendent justification for his revolutionary passions. His work, despite its incandescent passion, is always characterised by a lightness – an openness. He does not turn his immanent existential humanism into a religion. But his vision could be called spiritual in the sense that Victor Frankl’s psychology is spiritual. Frankl, who identifies himself as an existential humanist, argues that the human being has a will-to-meaning (as opposed to the Freudian will-to-pleasure and the

Nietzschean will-to-power) and that this, together with the capacity to choose, gives the human being a spiritual dimension. In this sense of spiritual (i.e. when 'spiritual' refers to a free being's will-to-meaning, rather than to the possession of a non-material soul or a human connection with God) would allow us to describe Fanon's work as spiritual and to note that some of its power to create new humanistic subjectivities may inhere in its spirituality. A spirituality which, unlike that of certain forms of orthodox religion, does not preclude human freedom.

This sense that there is some sacred potential in humanity, a potential which can be and is actualised from time to time, can lead to a sense of awe and reverence for the sacred nature of human creativity. This feeling or subjectivity has an extraordinarily persuasive power not simply in that it wins readers to Fanon's cause (e.g. anti-racism or decolonisation), but also in that it can create in the reader the subjectivities that generate an emotional or, in Frankl's terms, a spiritual identification with what is human. In turn, this can inspire action aimed at realising a more human world Where "human" describes the realisation of the positive potential that exists in every human being.

Bakunin realised that this mode of apprehension carries with it extraordinary power when he wrote that "we are the sons of the Revolution and we have inherited from it the Religion of Humanity which we have to found upon the ruins of the Religion of Divinity." (1953:142) If atheism or secularism is understood necessarily to lead to the abandonment of these modes of apprehending the world, of being in the world, then secularism strips humanity of a mode of being that generates and focuses powerful energies. This could be likened to throwing the proverbial baby out with the bath water. The listlessness and anomie that result may not be overtly reactionary, but they are hardly able to fuel the desires required for real transformation.

It should, by now, be clear that it would be dishonest to try to explain Fanon's thought without reference to his humanism and I hope to have developed a rough explanation of its nature. But the question I hope to have raised is whether we should consider a return to the transformative power of revolutionary humanism.

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CHAPTER II
THE PERSONALISM OF JOHN MACMURRAY
GERARD McCABE

It is my intention in this paper to present an overview of the personalistic philosophy of John Macmurray. To help place his thought in context I will begin with a few comments on personalism as a philosophy. After looking in more detail at Macmurray's understanding of the nature of the human person, I will conclude by suggesting that in Macmurray's thought we are being reminded of something which is necessary for a proper understanding of the human person; namely, that it is an essential that as human beings we are in relationship with others.

UNDERSTANDING PERSONALISM

The quest to understand the essential nature of the human being has a long history in philosophy. One of the ways of coming to such an understanding can be seen in the philosophy of personalism. It is correct to say that, as a philosophical movement, personalism remains somehow unfashionable. For example in the latest edition of *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* published in 1995, although the text runs to more than 1000 pages, there is not even a single line devoted to the subject of personalism.

We might think of personalism as a philosophical approach that has its roots in 19th century thought, but which reached its most systematic expression in the 20th century. In Germany, the personalist tradition was built by the phenomenologist Max Schele (1874-1928). It has strong roots also in France, which Emmanuel Mounier wrote his *Personalist Manifesto* in 1940. Other French philosophers who have been described as personalists are Gabriel Marcel, Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Levinas.

Personalism is concerned to analyse the meaning and nature of human existence, but it is ready to acknowledge that in many ways the human being always will remain a mystery that can never be fully explained or understood.

Personalism, as a philosophy, has many faces. Some personalists are idealists, believing that reality is constituted by consciousness, while others claim to be realistic personalists arguing that the natural order is created by God and not constituted by human consciousness. It may be true that most personalists are theists, but a belief in God is not necessary to all personalist philosophies.

What all personalists would share in common is their belief that the human person should be the ontological and epistemological starting point of philosophical reflection. They are concerned to investigate the status and dignity of the human being as person. The dignity and value of the human person should provide the foundation for all subsequent philosophical analysis.

For personalists, the value of each person is to be found not in an individual's contribution to society or in one's talents and achievements, but in the ontological significance of their being. Several aspects of the human being show the proper dignity of each human being, namely, the faculties of intelligence, creativity and freedom. The capacity for love is often understood to be the most wonderful feature of human existence. Our ability to know the world in which we live is seen, too, as an aspect of our inherent dignity. Finally, the physical and genetic uniqueness of each person is a mark of human dignity. Each person can be seen as an original and unique expression of human nature. This allows us to appreciate the irreplaceable value of all human

persons. Taking all these aspects together, it becomes clear that each person ought to be affirmed for his or her own sake.

Personalism also focuses on the social character of human life. It is one of Macmurray's major beliefs that to be a person means we are in relation with one another: personal being is necessarily relational. Community becomes an important element of personalist thought, understanding community to be not an aggregate of individuals but a unity of persons.

Personalism obviously has profound ethical implications both for each person and for society as a whole. In the political context, persons and their lives are more important than any political system or structure. In a world often seen as growing increasingly depersonalised the value of the human person is to be safeguarded.

While we may see a real consensus among personalist thinkers about the primacy and the dignity of the human person, there is room, too, for a wide variety of opinions regarding the question of the existence and nature of God. There are no formalised agreements about methods and definitions; even the definition of personhood remains for many a matter of debate.

JOHN MACMURRAY

Macmurray was born in Scotland in 1891. He came from a strong religious background and his faith was to remain of great importance to him throughout his life. In 1909 he went to the University of Glasgow to study Classics, and in 1913 moved to Balliol College, Oxford.

The war years of 1914-1918 were to prove of great importance to his philosophical development. Macmurray believed that any civilization which could produce the horrors of the Great War must be deeply flawed in its values and assumptions. The sight of so many people being killed for nothing more than a few metres of land filled him with horror and deepened his commitment to the idea that each person is of infinite value.

During the war he was invited to preach at a church in London, and he used the opportunity to call for reconciliation and peace. His words were not welcome, and the hatred of these supposedly good Christian people was enough for Macmurray to turn away from all institutional religion. Only in the last few years of his life did he join the Society of Friends ("Quakers").

From 1919 to 1921 Macmurray was professor of philosophy at the University of Witwatersrand, after which he returned to Balliol College for seven years. In 1928 he became Professor of Mind and Logic at University College, London. In the following years he published many works on the nature of communism, on science and religion, and on the idea of the personal life. In *Interpreting the Universe*, published in 1933, he argued that a mechanistic or organic interpretations of life cannot do full justice to human experience.

In 1944 Macmurray became Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, a post he held until his retirement in 1958. The highpoint of his academic career was the invitation to give the Gifford Lectures in 1953-54. Based on his understanding of the form of the personal, these lectures were subsequently published in two volumes, *The Self as Agent* and *Persons in Relation*. Macmurray died in June, 1976, at the age of eighty-five.

THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The Person as Agent

It was Macmurray's ardent belief that traditional academic philosophy was unable adequately to describe the nature of the human person. One can see his whole life as an attempt to come to a deeper and more adequate understanding of the person. This lifelong attempt finds its most mature voice in the above-mentioned Gifford Lectures. Macmurray offered this very succinct summary of his overall thesis:

The simplest expression that I can find for the thesis I have tried to maintain is this: All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship. (*The Self as Agent*, 14-15)

Macmurray's starting point was to attempt to show that philosophy ever since the time of Descartes had moved in a fundamentally wrong direction. In making an analysis of modern Western philosophy, he suggests that we find two distinct phases, the one dominated by a mechanistic view of the world and of the human person, the other dominated by an organic view of the world and of the person. Neither view is adequate.

Macmurray used Descartes' philosophy as the clearest expression of the mechanistic view of the world. According to Macmurray's interpretation of Descartes, the method of doubting everything leads to the single insight of *Cogito ergo sum*, (I think, therefore I am). This has become for many the real starting point of modern philosophy. While Macmurray agreed that all philosophical thought is theoretical by its very nature, he argued that Descartes' insight leaves us with only the concept of an isolated, purely thinking being. If we are to understand the human individual as no more than a detached consciousness, then it becomes impossible for us to explain human action. Moreover, it becomes difficult to understand the existence of other human beings, and even more so the existence of God. By accepting the fundamental principles of Descartes we are left with a dualism between mind and body which is impossible to overcome. In the process of knowing I, as subject, am removed from the material world that I seek to know as object. For Macmurray, it is this radical distinction between subject and object is what is most objectionable in the philosophy of Descartes.

Macmurray sees a second movement in modern philosophy which can be described as organic, with Kant as its best representative. Kant was critical of rationalism, arguing that we cannot come to a proper understanding of the world by thought alone. We can come to true knowledge only through a synthesis of what we experience through the senses and concepts or categories of pure thought. These exist in our minds and are imposed on our sense experience to make sense of the world.

But Kant argues that these categories of pure thought or categories of understanding are in the mind of the knower rather than aspects of things as they really are in themselves. The result is that what we can know through this process is only the world *as it appears to us*, and not the world as *it is in itself*. This noumenal world is, to all effects, beyond the capacities of human knowledge.

Macmurray's criticism of Kant is that he is not able to make any proper connection between a thing as it is in itself and that thing as it appears to me. He is unable to show that the real object out there and the knowledge of that object which I have in my mind actually do correspond.

Like Descartes, Kant understands the knowing subject to be absolutely separate from the object, which is the major problem for modern philosophy. Therefore Macmurray feels the need to offer an alternative vision which will overcome the problem of dualism by substituting the

idea of a thinking by that of a doing subject or an agent. He proposes to reject dualism through asserting the primacy of the practical.

We should substitute the *I do* for the *I think* as our starting point and centre of reference, and do our thinking from the standpoint of action. (*The Self as Agent*, 84)

Macmurray is not here denying the importance of thinking. But he sees it as only one of our human qualities. Action is a more fundamental and, therefore, more appropriate expression of what it is to be a human being. He asserts that while thought cannot logically explain action, the latter by its very nature includes the activity of thinking. Therefore, action is a much more inclusive concept than thought. Any theory of knowledge is derived from, and also included within, a theory of action. Macmurray believes that the human being that reflects and the human being that acts is always the same human being. Action and thought are properly understood as simply different modes of activity.

Macmurray is anxious to avoid the temptation to understand the agent or the person in simply egocentric terms, which he finds prevalent in much of modern philosophy. He asserts that the Self is neither a substance nor an organism only, but a person. The major problem for contemporary philosophy is to come to an adequate understanding of the form of the personal.

Beings in Relation

In *Persons in Relation*, Macmurray attempts to clarify his understanding of the form of the personal. Having previously suggested that the self exists as an agent or someone who acts, and not simply as a thinking object, he now argues that the self who is agent does not exist in isolation from other agents. To be a human being is to live in relationship with other human beings:

The thesis we have to expound and to sustain is that the self is constituted by its relation to the Other; that it has its being in its relationship; and that this relationship is necessarily personal. (*Persons in Relation*, 17)

Macmurray attempts to justify his claims that the idea of the person in relation with other persons constitutes the most appropriate understanding of the human being. He begins with a consideration of the relationship between mother and child. It is clear that a baby is totally helpless and, therefore, totally dependent on others if it is even to live. For Macmurray, this dependence is not to be understood simply in biological terms. The baby has the need for personal care, to be touched and embraced. It is this need for personal care and love from the mother figure that helps us to see the primacy of relationships in our lives. Macmurray considers relationship to be the constitutive element of life.

We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence. Individual independence is an illusion; and the independent individual, the isolated self, is a nonentity. (*Persons in Relation*, 211)

The image of the mother and child relationship serves as a symbol of the fact that to be a human person is to be in relationship with others. Macmurray now moves on to suggest that the idea of being in relationship necessarily involves the *intention* of being in relationship with others. Relationships are not simply matters of fact.

The intention of being in relationship with another person provides the opportunity for friendship, which becomes the hallmark of what it is to be a person in relation with others. The idea of community is a more appropriate expression of our being than that of society. Macmurray, therefore, suggests that the visions of society offered by Hobbes and Rousseau are inadequate because they are aimed only at the protection of individuals in the pursuit of their private interests. The underlying motive behind the views of both Hobbes and Rousseau is that, as human beings, we live in constant fear of others. In such a climate friendship becomes difficult to attain and to maintain. Friendship and community offer us a far greater degree of personal freedom.

A community is for the sake of friendship and presupposes love. But it is only in friendship that persons are free in relation; if the relationship is based on fear we are constrained in it and not free. (*Persons in Relation*, 151)

We can more clearly understand what it is to be a person when we see that community offers a better quality of life than does society. The characteristics of friendship are what best describe the basic structure of community.

In friendship, the relationship between people is heterocentric. Each person acts and feels and thinks with a real love and concern for the other, and not in the first place for oneself. Each person realizes oneself in and through the other. They are related as equals, and this equality is intentional. Also, in friendship both involved are able to realize their freedom as agents. Since they have no need to live in fear of the other, or to act out of fear of the other, each is able to be fully himself.

Macmurray believes that equality and freedom, both essential qualities of friendship, are constitutive of community. To achieve real community, the equality and freedom offered in real friendship is to be offered to everyone with whom we are in personal relation. This vision of a community of friends enables Macmurray to formulate the ideal of the personal.

It is a universal community of persons in which each cares for all the others and no one for himself. This ideal of the personal is also the condition of freedom . . . for every person. (*Persons in Relation*, 159)

Up to this point Macmurray has attempted to show that human beings are constituted by their relations with one another. He now suggests that this picture, in itself, is incomplete without making some reference to the common world which is shared by all human beings. A community of agents is necessarily part of the world in which it acts. Human beings are not simply persons in communion with one another, but also elements of the natural world.

How is our relation to the world to be conceived? Macmurray argues that we must conceive this relationship, too, in personal terms. The universe is a personal universe. But the idea of a personal universe forces us to ask whether God exists, which takes us to Macmurray's notion that religion is central to any understanding of the personal life and of community life.

Religion

Macmurray remains well aware that community is always a fragile notion. It is all too easy for relations to break down and for fear of others to overcome our friendship with them. It is in maintaining the bonds of friendship and community that religion proves worthwhile and necessary.

Macmurray believes that religion is a universal human experience which must be properly taken into account if we are to understand the true nature of human being. While we can attempt to understand human nature from a simply material or organic view, these remain inadequate without the form of the personal. Religion is concerned with those aspects of human experience which make us persons and not simply matter or organisms.

He goes on to develop the reasons why religion is an essential element of human life. In the first place we note the universality of religion in the human society. For Macmurray this is an indication that the source of religion lies in some characteristic of human being which is both common and universal. The fact that religion is to be seen as a purely human experience suggests that it must be personal. Macmurray further argues that, from a historical point of view, all the various cultural expressions of humanity have developed out of religious experience. Finally, he suggests that religion is, in intention, inclusive of all members of the society to which it refers. Religion, therefore, is characteristically inclusive and universal, and therefore helpful in creating real community. Any religion which fails to offer inclusiveness and universality is necessarily inadequate and erroneous.

Religion can then be understood as an expression of the celebration of communion with others:

We may define the function of religion as being to create, maintain and deepen the community of persons and to extend it without limit . . . by eliminating the dominance of fear in human relations. To achieve this would be to create a universal community of persons in which all personal relations were positively motivated, and all its members were free and equal in relation. Such a community would be the full self-realization of the personal. (*Persons in Relation*, 163)

Macmurray suggests that the individual members of a community need to have a shared belief in the religious aspect of their lives. This can come about only if the individual members have accepted the fact that their community is an intentional one, based on acting for the sake of others. Religion, therefore, itself becomes a personal reality, based on the idea of a personal Other who stands in the same mutual relationship with each member of the community. This founds the unity of a community of persons, each in personal relationship with the other members of the community.

This universal Other can be described as a universal Agent, whose action in the world and in our lives unifies the actions of each community member. The continuing intention of this universal Agent is the unity of all human beings:

In its full development, the idea of a universal personal Other is the idea of God. (*Persons in Relation*, 164)

For Macmurray the move from the *I think* to the *I do*, from the idea of the person as a disembodied thinker to that of a social agent, also involves a change in our understanding of the nature of God. Instead of understanding God as First Cause or Prime Mover, this brings one to an appreciation of God as Person, a God who acts and is in relationship with the world and with human beings.

It is possible, of course, for our religious expressions to be inadequate and sources of division rather than of unity. But a fully and properly developed understanding of religion will be in harmony with our appreciation of the necessity of relationships:

Religious reflection, when it is full-grown, must represent the original personal author of the community as the author of the world; and the life of community as a fellowship of the world – of man with Nature as well as of man with man. . . . Religion would then be simply the celebration of communion – of the fellowship of all things in God. Meanwhile, it sustains the intention to achieve this fellowship. (*Persons in Relation*, 165)

In drawing his Gifford lectures to a conclusion, Macmurray believes that, by moving our philosophical standpoint from the *I think* to the *I do*, he has been able to offer a more adequate understanding of the nature of the human person, and of our essential relatedness with one another. The primacy of relationships and of community allows him, too, to understand the world as a personal world guided by the God who remains always personal.

Macmurray completed his Gifford lectures in 1954 as the fruit of a lifelong search for the essential meaning of what it is to be a human being.

But his conclusions are not markedly different from the views that he had expressed to a friend more than twenty years before:

I shall treat personality, and the relations of persons in love as sacred and to be revered, and nothing else. Whatever is impersonal must not be revered or treated as sacred. . . . To do so is to be idolatrous, to worship as God what is not God. And to treat what is personal impersonally is to pollute a holy thing. (Introduction to *Reason and Emotion*, p.xv).

CONCLUSION

Macmurray has never been what we might term a fashionable philosopher. His whole philosophical enterprise found few friends among those who believed that the primary task of philosophy was to deal with questions of linguistics. Gilbert Ryle, a more famous contemporary philosopher of Macmurray, said that the problem with Macmurray was that he wrote and spoke too simply. Most, believing that they understood him, felt he had nothing profound to offer.

Marx said that the task of philosophy is not to understand the world but to change it. These sentiments may well be laudable, but one may ask if it is possible to change the world without having a proper understanding of it.

By attempting to come to a proper understanding of the nature of the human person, I believe that Macmurray has given us a way of changing our world. By seeing that an essential element of the human person is to be in relationship with other human persons, he has added an insight that can offer hope to a world becoming increasingly depersonalised. Alienation and isolation need not be the last word in our experience of human life. In revealing the essential

relatedness of human being, Macmurray has shown that, indeed, he does have something profound to offer.

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CHAPTER III
THE ETHICAL BOUNDARIES OF BUSINESS:
QUESTIONS OF INTEGRITY

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An attitude of extreme arrogance permeates the business world today. In the wake of the post-modern discretion of most independent standards of moral behaviour, capitalists the world over are relatively free to worship at the hollow idol of the Market, unhindered by the ethical standards that inform the rest of society. In South Africa this estrangement from the moral has, in one instance, resulted in the mass reduction of permanent positions available to workers in favour of unstable short-term contracts or, what anti-corporate globalisation activists refer to as, McJobs. By ignoring the deep psychological effects that this sort of insecure existence has on employees, the business world has shown itself to be arrogant and indifferent to the ethical standards of the society "outside" of itself.

Indeed, one can spend hours listing the callous results of this estrangement, (e.g., the refusal of pharmaceutical companies to provide life-saving anti-retrovirals at affordable prices to African AIDS victims, the privatisation of water which has resulted in water cut-offs in schools and slums across the country, the slow genocide of the country's poor, and so on). But the purpose of this essay is not to conduct an empirical study of objective evil. That literature and research already exists. Nor is the purpose of this essay to reduce the eternal pessimism of the left. The recent anti-corporate and anti-globalisation demonstrations in Seattle, Prague, Washington, Davos, Australia, and Durban have shown that this energy-sapping pessimism that, for years, blanketed the left is slowly beginning to lift. Vibrant and militant civil society movements are springing up faster than the Market can contain them. The pessimism of old has given way to a new hope.

What this essay attempts to do is to correct the dangerous, clinical, and anti-human perception that exists amongst businessmen that the world of business must be accorded a different ethical standard from that of the rest of society. In order to justify this stance, businessmen have employed a variety of arguments, but most centre around the claim that the Market functions like a well-oiled machine and, as vital cogs in this machine, they cannot afford to be hindered by human standards of right and wrong. It will be my contention in this essay that not only are such arguments false, but that they are extremely dangerous given the vast powers of multi-national companies today. My essay will take the form of a response to a controversial essay entitled "Is Business Bluffing Ethical?" (i.e., is deception in business ethical?), written in the late sixties by A.Z. Carr. His arguments in favour of business bluffing can, in many ways, be considered as a validation for the "ethical" positions occupied by many businessmen today. By criticising Carr's stance, I hope to cast a critical light upon the anti-ethical attitudes that inform today's business world.

I will begin my essay by outlining briefly Carr's argument that most bluffing or deception in business might be regarded simply as game strategy. In this outline I will highlight two of Carr's key points. First, our business and private lives are separate from each other, and, as such, we cannot expect the ethical standards of our private lives to rule over the ethical standards of our business lives. Secondly, business has the impersonal character of a game in which the act of deception is considered a legitimate and necessary tool for one to attain success. Thereafter, I will proceed to give two examples wherein I argue that deception within the business world leads

to conformity and a loss of personal integrity, values, and identity. This will be followed by a brief explanation of Carr's poker analogy, wherein he claims that we can learn a great deal about the nature of business by comparing it with the game of poker. He argues that most businessmen are not indifferent to ethics in their private lives, but once these businessmen enter into their office lives they cease to be private citizens; they are instead game players who must be guided by a different set of ethical standards.

I will then proceed to analyse the validity of Carr's poker analogy by asking if business can, in fact, be regarded as a game. This will be followed by a brief investigation into the feasibility of Carr's claim that business roles are isolated from private roles – i.e. whether the businessman stops being a private citizen once he enters the business realm. I will support my argument on three fronts. I will claim that the act of deception within the business situation is actually detrimental to the individual; secondly, I will claim that business is, in fact, not a game, as the consequences of bluffing within business situations move well beyond the game arena; finally, I will claim that our business and personal roles cannot be separated, and, as such, the ethical standards of our personal roles must necessarily influence the ethical standards of our business roles.

THE INDIVIDUAL IN BUSINESS

In his essay Carr makes an argument which many people in and out of the business world consider shocking and even morally repugnant. He argues that most bluffing (deception) in business might be regarded simply as game strategy. The reason for this moral outrage, shock and repugnance, according to him, is to be found in the confusion people make between the ethics of private life and the ethics of business. For Carr these two aspects of our lives (business and private) are distinct and separate from each other, and to expect the ethics of our private lives to rule over our business lives is, in the long run, bad business. He argues that once businessmen are in their work environment they cease to be private citizens and instead become game players who are guided by a different set of ethical standards. Furthermore within the game of business: "Falsehood ceases to be falseness when it is understood on all sides that the truth is not expected to be spoken." (Carr: 1968:99) What this simply means is that deception, as we traditionally understand it, cannot be considered as deception if all people involved in business accept that it is an important part of playing the "game".

According to Carr, business people all, at one time or another, feel the pressure to deceive. They are compelled, in the interests of their company or themselves, to practise some form of deception when engaged in negotiations with others (e.g. customers, unions). This deception by conscious misstatements, concealment of facts, or exaggeration is undertaken with the strict purpose of seeking to persuade others to agree with them. Agreement, of course, implies a host of benefits for either the individual or the company or for both.

According to Carr, if the individual businessman or executive refuses to engage in these acts of deception from time to time – if he feels an obligation (by way of his personal ethics) to tell the whole truth – then he is ignoring opportunities permitted under the rules of the game and effectively putting his business at a heavy disadvantage. Thus, to forego these personal ethical obligations and misgivings about deception and to realise the effectiveness of the "bluff" as a legitimate tool within the game of business involves first and foremost a recognition by the businessman that in bluffing he will not lose self-respect or become emotionally troubled. What this means is that if the businessman is to achieve a harmonious unity between his personal

integrity and high standards of honesty, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the practical requirements of business, then he must feel that his acts of deception are ethically justified. And, according to Carr, this justification comes from the fact that "business, as practiced by individuals as well as corporations, has the impersonal character of a game – a game that demands both special strategy and an understanding of its *special* ethics." (Carr 1968:101, italics added) Once the individual enters into a business situation, one is thus necessarily in a game situation and success or failure depends largely on one's ability, whatever one's position in the company, to play the game in the appropriate way.

Carr gives the example of a Cornell honour graduate who, in a psychological test, has to indicate which publications he reads regularly. The graduate, however, is concerned that by indicating the actual "progressive" publications he reads he will be considered as a radical and, thus, put himself at a disadvantage. He finally chooses to lie and selects several conservative publications which he thinks will be more in sync with the policies of his employers – his hunch turns out to be right, and he gets the job. According to Carr, the graduate has made a game player's decision which is consistent with business ethics.

A recent film also provides another example of this sort of dilemma. In *Jerry Maguire*, Cuba Gooding, Jr. plays a football player approaching retirement, and Tom Cruise plays his sports agent. Throughout his football career Gooding's character has always played the game to the best of his ability and is regularly featured on the scoring list. However, his on-field ability has never been reflected in monetary terms, as the contracts he signs with the football teams inevitably see him earn less than more popular and less skilled players. His agent advises him that his problem is not with his skill level but rather with the fact that he doesn't entertain the crowd, as other players do, when he scores a touchdown. This causes him to be unpopular with crowds as he appears to be arrogant which subsequently is reflected negatively on his pay-slips. The solution, Cruise tells him, is to forget about his pride and do a touchdown dance like all the other players. In the film's climatic ending Gooding's character scores the game-winning touchdown but is subsequently knocked unconscious. The crowd cheers for him, and when he eventually awakes, ball still in hand, he is faced with a decision – to dance and get a bigger pay day or to walk away as usual and face a penniless retirement. In the end he decides to dance and the million-dollar offers start rolling in. This clearly is what Carr wants business people to do. To play the game means dancing when and how people tell you to. It means forgetting about personal values and integrity, all in the effort to make money by conforming to questionable standards. The Cornell honours graduate and Cuba Gooding Jr. may have been financially rewarded by deciding to play the game through their acts of deception, but in the long run they have sacrificed something greater, namely, their sense of personal integrity, values and identity. In short, they have given up their individuality for the benefits and warm safety of conformity.

To conform, in the Heideggerian sense of the word, means to lose oneself in the crowd, it is a loss of identity and is ultimately a form of self-deception. In the classic existential language, this might also be categorised as a manifestation of bad faith. This extremely useful philosophic concept has been strangely under-utilized by most contemporary philosophers, with the possible exception of several notable critical race and liberation theorists who have used it to explain the situation of the oppressed in a racist/colonial/neo-colonial world.

The South African philosopher, Mabogo More, defines bad faith as follows: "The concept of bad faith popularised by Jean-Paul Sartre basically refers to different modes of human existence characterised by self-deception, self-evasion, flight from one's freedom and responsibility and the acceptance of values as pre-given." (More, 1998: 14) More's North American contemporary,

Lewis Gordon, defines it as follows: "Bad Faith consists in the individual's moving from subject to object in social roles which have congealed consciousness into routine expectancy and which have made of inter-subjectivity a masked and masking reality." (Gordon: 1995: 107)

Bad Faith is a form of self-deception – the paradox of lying to oneself – usually in an attempt to escape the responsibility and freedom of being an individual. We, thus, tend to make excuses, to say that we didn't make the choices that led us to a certain situation. To be in bad faith is, thus, to deny that one is a free agent. This means that human beings are aware, no matter how hidden that awareness, of their freedom in various situations. And because of this awareness they bear some responsibility for their positions in these situations, that is, they have played a part in constructing their present reality. But what does it mean to lie to oneself? To understand this we must first grasp the structure of a lie or deception – or rather the conditions that are necessarily for a lie or deception to take place.

Firstly, as least two people or two consciousnesses are required for a lie to take place, the liar (deceiver) who is aware of the truth and the lied to (the deceived) who is unaware of the truth. However being in bad faith involves lying within a single consciousness. Thus, the person is both aware and unaware of the truth at the same time.

So in order to play the game the individual must necessarily be in bad faith. One must hide one's true self and project a false image based on what is expected of one. To live such a life means always being on the alert, never letting ones guard down and always ensuring that one never rises above the crowd. In such an existence all sense of personal integrity, values, and identity is lost in the never-ending effort to avoid the detection of one's true self. As the honours graduate moves up the corporate ranks, he does so knowing that it is not really he that is getting a promotion but the false image of himself. When he is complimented for completing a good deal, it is not really he that is receiving the compliment as his true self was hidden from view the day he falsified his test and constructed the expected image of himself. Carr argues that deception within the business game is a legitimate tool in seeking to persuade others to agree with you and that such agreement will bring with it a host of benefits for the individual. But it is clear that the individual receives no such benefits – it is in actuality the false image (inauthentic self) of his true self (authentic self) that benefits from these acts of deception. The individual himself neither achieves nor gains anything as long as his true identity remains hidden behind his constructed self. But to reveal one's true self in order to claim such benefits is to rebel against conformity, and one must then necessarily feel the wrath of the crowd. Thus, the individual becomes a person imprisoned by self-deception. Similarly when the crowds cheer for Gooding's football player, it is not really for him that they are cheering; the "authentic" player sought to do his job well and not pander to the expectations of the crowds. They cheer not because he has done his job well, but because they have succeeded in pulling him back into the crowd where he loses all sense of himself as an individual with his own set of personal values and his own identity. They cheer because he has chosen to dance to their tune, because he has chosen to deceive himself and others, because he has, in short, chosen to play the game.

THE GAME OF BUSINESS

But what exactly is the game and what does it involve? The analogy Carr draws on to illustrate his argument is one of business as a game of poker. According to Carr, we can learn a great deal about the nature of business by comparing it with poker. Both rely largely on elements of chance, but in the long run it is the player with the most consistent skill level that wins. Carr

claims that to achieve victory in both "games" requires an intimate knowledge of the rules, self-discipline, insight into the psychology of the other "players", and the ability to respond swiftly and decisively to opportunities provided by chance. He adds that poker has its own brand of ethics that is different from the ethical ideals of civilised human relationships. Furthermore, nobody who plays poker expects it to be played on the basis of the ethical principles that are espoused in churches. It is well within the rules of poker to bluff a fellow player and if that bluff is successful the winning player ought not to feel any sympathy for the loser, as it was up to him (the loser) to protect himself from losing. The implication, of course, is that poker isn't a game for people with weak constitutions. If any sympathy is shown for the loser it is regarded as personal gesture which must be separated from the rules of the game. Thus, it is game that necessitates a certain distrust of the other players and which must also ignore any claims to friendships.

It follows then that the key to success in poker lies not in kindness and open-heartedness but in cunning deception and in keeping one's strengths and intentions concealed. These tactics are not held against the poker player, because they are accepted methods of winning the game. Therefore, according to Carr, no one should hold anything against the game of business because its standards of right and wrong differ from the accepted traditions of morality in our society. He maintains that most businessmen are not indifferent to ethics in their private lives, but once these businessmen enter into their office lives, they cease to be private citizens; they are instead game players who must be guided by a different set of ethical standards.

I will address Carr's argument here on two grounds: First, we should establish whether the analogy he draws between poker and business is accurate. Is business in fact a game that requires a different set of standards of right and wrong from the rest of society? Secondly we should question whether the businessman stops being a private citizen once he enters the business realm. Is it possible to isolate our personal roles from our business roles? To address the first question, I would argue that comparing business to the game of poker shows a poor critical understanding of both game and business situations. A game is an activity that operates within a well-defined lexicon of rules and regulations, that is, it constructs boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable game-play. Vagaries and inconsistencies of rules and regulations are rarely tolerated, and, if they are encountered, efforts are made to make suitable amendments so that such problems are not encountered again. In that regard games can be said to be activities that operate within well-defined boundaries. In a game like poker, which has many well-established rules, the most skilful player is not necessarily the player who has the best comprehension of these rules, but is rather the player who can best manoeuvre within these boundaries. The poker player who is adept at bluffing is considered skilful precisely because he is capable of deceptive manoeuvring within the confines of the game. Deception, of course, is a vital part of most games. This is primarily because, once all game players reach a certain level of technical proficiency, it becomes difficult to gain victory over opponents using abilities that the other player possesses in equal amounts – the trick in such a situation is to bluff. In that regard boxing – a game with which South Africans are much more familiar – is perhaps one of the leading exponents of the strategy of the bluff. Faking left when you want to punch right or using deceptive foot movement to upset the stance of the other boxer are just some of the instances where the bluff is used to great effect. As an interesting aside, who could forget Mohammed Ali's famous "roper-dope" strategy employed during his fight against George Foreman. Ali, who was much older than his opponent, played possum for most of the fight, while at the same time using the ropes as support against the onslaught of Foreman before he knocked the tiring boxer out – surely claiming the

mantle of the greatest bluff in sport history. But, although deception plays an important part of most games it is seldom frowned upon by other players.

Indeed, many game players will compliment their opponents on successfully deceiving them. In such instances the deceived player will often call the deceiver a "sneaky bastard" or tell him that he "really pulled the wool over my eyes", and on such occasions most deceivers will smile slyly and thank the opponent for the compliment. But in our everyday lives no person wishes to be called a "sneaky bastard" or to have the wool pulled over their eyes primarily because to be called sneaky implies that you are a person who is dishonest or untrustworthy, while having the wool pulled over your eyes implies that you have been unfairly misled. So why do we accept such "compliments" in the game arena? Precisely because it is a game arena, that is, games are occasions where we suspend the rules of society to participate in artificial or constructed scenarios. These constructed scenarios are morally sterile and deliberately distant from the situations we find ourselves in everyday. After all, games are meant to be fun and to offer a relief from our, very often, mundane lives. This is why games are often called a "suspension of reality". For a few hours we forget about our lived reality to participate in activities that are distant from it. But why are games so distant from our lived reality?

Besides the obvious artificial and contrived nature of these games, the other important factor is that actions and decisions taken within games do not have any consequences on our lived reality. Any deception that occurs within the game arena has an effect only on the outcome of the game. The consequences of the deception resonate only within the well-defined boundaries of the game. This is why poker is able to have a different standard of right and wrong from the rest of society – i.e. because such a standard has no detrimental effect on that society. Furthermore, being called a "sneaky bastard" within a poker game implies that one used the strategy of the bluff effectively in winning the game. It is accepted by all players that such a statement is no reflection whatsoever of the moral standing of the bluffer outside of the game. Now to make a case for business as poker we would have to show that the consequences of business bluffing remain within the "game-arena" of business and have no effect whatsoever on the society outside of that arena. This is quite obviously not so. Decisions made within business situations have a profound effect not only on people working within that company, but also on the people outside of that company. A crude example would be the decision to merge two companies into one larger one which would necessitate the retrenching of approximately half their combined employees. It is clear that such a decision cannot be regarded as a game player's decision, as its consequences move beyond the boundaries of the game arena (e.g. the entire economies of some small towns can collapse in such mergers) and into society. As we have established, a game ceases to be a game once its standards of right and wrong clash with the standards of the society outside it. Perhaps we should examine a subtler example: an executive deceives an employee into thinking that in one year's time he will receive a promotion and a suitable pay increase. The employee was initially reluctant to stay on at the company because he received lucrative offers from other companies, but, once the executive assured him of his future at the company, he made the decision of staying on at his present company. The executive, however, has no intention of promoting this particular employee as he is indispensable in his current position – what he hopes to achieve by his deception is to buy some time to train somebody else to take over in a year's time.

A year later the employee is no longer in demand, as the glut in the market has been filled, and he is actually fighting for his position in his present company. This might, on face value, appear to be a case where the consequences of the executive's deception are restricted within the

business scenario – after all his act of deception was a necessary step that had to be taken to save the company money and the employee is always welcome to stay on in his old position, provided he accept that he will not be promoted. In the business game arena, the winner would obviously be the executive and the loser the employee – in this regard it appears to be a neat end to a game situation. But it is clear that the employee is a loser not only in the business arena, but also in the private arena for all his future plans for a prosperous life are now decidedly bleak. If the employee calls the executive a "sneaky bastard", he is quite obviously not paying him a compliment on his skilful deception, but is rather saying that the executive acted in an unfair manner – i.e. he makes recourse to ethical standards outside of the game scenario. This clearly indicates that he has been affected on a private or personal level. The consequences of the bluff thus move beyond the "game" arena and, as such, this cannot be called a game player's decision. We have now established that Carr's analogy of business as the game of poker is at best very tenuous as it fails to grasp the notion that the consequences of business decisions or deceptions very often move beyond the business arena.

SEPARATING OUR BUSINESS AND PERSONAL ROLES

At this point it would be interesting to ponder what the executive would have replied had he heard his employee call him a "sneaky bastard". In all probability he would have answered that he was just conducting good business and that it was nothing personal – i.e. he draws a distinction between his business and private lives. The executive's attitude seems to be in line with Carr's claim that these two aspects of our lives (business and private) are distinct and separate from each other, and that to expect the ethics of our private lives to rule over our business lives is in the long run bad business. He further argues that once businessmen are in their work environment they cease to be private citizens and, instead, become game players who are guided by a different set of ethical standards. This attitude can be classified as a winner's attitude. What this means is that a winner in business will always insist that business decisions have no bearing on the world outside of the business arena – for the winner, business decisions can truly be regarded as game players' decisions.

But this fallacy is easily exposed once we assert that a winner one day can easily be a loser the next. In such a case the appeal is almost inevitably to issues of fairness – in other words the loser brings in the standards of the outside world to question decisions made on the basis of a supposedly different standard from that world. But why does the loser do so? This is because he is a citizen of both the business world and the world outside his company, that is, the private world. As Robert C. Solomon writes in his thoughtful essay "Business Ethics: An Aristotelian Approach", "[C]orporations are not isolated city-states, not even the biggest and most powerful of the multinationals. They are part and parcel of a larger global community. The people that work for them are thus citizens of two communities at once." (Solomon 1992: 216) It is clear that the business world overlaps greatly with the world outside it. Businesspeople work in a company but they also live in the community of which the company is a part.

Thus, the ethical standards of our community or private lives are bound to influence or overlap with the ethical standards of our business lives. Furthermore, it becomes difficult to draw distinctions between our business and private lives given the current economic and political power of companies today – for instance of the top 53 economies in the world, 41 are multinationals. The might and influence of companies are literally everywhere. With the lines blurred, it becomes virtually impossible to conceive of a neat separation between business and

private lives as decisions taken in one sphere can have profound effects on the other. Therefore, Carr's assertion that our business and private lives are separate can be regarded as an oversimplification of the nuances of business relationships between business people themselves and businesses, on the one hand, and society, on the other. Since we have established that our business and private lives cannot be separated, it becomes clear that the ethical standards of our private lives are bound to influence the ethical standards of our business lives. It is also clear that since deception is considered unacceptable in our private lives we can consider it equally unacceptable in our business lives.

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CHAPTER IV

UNDERSTANDING THE "CRIMINAL" IN AN UNJUST SOCIETY

REFILOE SENATLA

It was after facing his own execution on December 22, 1849 that the Russian novelist, Feodor Dostoevsky started writing many of his best works. On that morning in 1849 he marched out with nineteen other political prisoners to face a firing squad in Semenovskiy Square, St Petersburg. The first group of men was blindfolded and tied to posts; the second, which included Dostoevsky, was then moved forward. At the last moment, with the firing squad taking aim, an officer rode forward with a white flag and announced that the death sentences had been commuted to imprisonment in Siberia. Dostoevsky (1821- 81) had been sentenced to death for allegedly plotting against the Tsar and for setting up a secret printing press for socialist propaganda. He consequently served four years hard labour in a camp at Omsk and after his release wrote about his prison experiences in *The House of the Dead* (1861). Dostoevsky's views on the criminal mind are set out in his most famous book, *Crime and Punishment*, published in 1866.

Crime and Punishment has been described as a psychological account of a crime. A young man, Raskolnikov, is expelled from university and finds himself living in extreme poverty. He is in a desperate situation with a grief-stricken mother and a sister about to undergo a "sacrificial" marriage to a wealthy nobleman. So he decides to kill an old pawn-broker whom he believes is "good for nothing, evil and lives on the blood of others". Raskolnikov believes that his crime (if it is a crime at all) is at the most "a humanitarian duty", on his part, "towards mankind". After all, he would have made his mother happy, he would have prevented his sister's "sacrificial" marriage, but above all he would have continued with his studies and thereafter be able to live honestly and make up for the crime.

In this article, I will pose the question of the possible justification of Raskolnikov's action. Is killing an old, crazy, not just greedy but evil and sick woman, who would probably die anyway, a crime? It probably is, but looking at this crime in the context of Raskolnikov's circumstances, is his action not justified. For he only killed a "louse" (he refers to the pawn broker as such) hence traded one useless life for his mother's happiness and his sister's moral deliverance? Let me not look at his action on its own but also the motives that support it, for I am trying to assess whether it is or can be justified.

THE "CRIME"

Raskolnikov does confess his crime. Having been introduced to his background, one would immediately think that it is because of poverty that Raskolnikov commits a crime. In fact, while in the process of plotting it, Raskolnikov is pushed by a humanitarian motive. However, he reveals that it is true he wanted to help his mother, but that this wasn't the real reason. "If nothing but need had urged me to commit a murder I should now be happy!" (Dostoevsky, 1993: 303) Instead, Raskolnikov is tormented and feels a sense of isolation and separation from humanity – even from his own family. It is this that forces him to give himself up, that forces him to be once again a part of humankind – a point I wish to return to later in this paper. It later

appears in his confession that Raskolnikov simply wished to prove himself a Napoleon, one capable of killing without any guilt. Raskolnikov reveals that he only longed to dare, and that was his sole motive! What a pity that nobody suspects him of being the murderer, so instead of being a Napoleon, he becomes an infamous coward left to bring himself forward. Whatever the motive, it seems as if our criminal is searching for one that seems the most flattering, and this he borrows from Nietzsche's superman. Does this work to justify his action?

In a conversation he has with a friend, Raskolnikov shows a commendable (if not convenient) understanding of Nietzsche's main thesis, that of mankind being divided into two groups. The first is that of the conservative majority, living in obedience. The other, however, consists of exceptional men who not only dare, but also command and, if the need arises, are also criminal creators of new values. In the latter group are the great leaders of humanity, without respect for any "sacred" laws, traditions and morals observed by the herd. Raskolnikov maintains that it is in these people's nature to be criminals for they find no other way to get out of the common rut. Raskolnikov is an inflated egoist. I had hoped that his confession would mark an end to his story; however, we find that he soon experiences a sense of psychological drama resulting from his crime that seems to suggest that egoism is morally wrong. I wish to argue that this need not be the case.

One answer to the question of whose interest to consider in deciding which action to perform is that one should choose the action that produces the best consequences for one. However, this does not totally disregard actions for other people for the egoist's action could be what is best for other people so that he will gain in the long run. This may often mean sacrificing one's short-term interest so that others may immediately gain. Raskolnikov commits a crime and gives himself up so that he may suffer, but this is a short-term obstacle, for soon he will be able to redeem his act by living honestly. Moralists maintain that egoism may be a sound account of rational self-interest, but that it is not a sound account of morality that involves the consequences for others and not merely for one. If this is the case, then what about our special moral obligations to people with whom we have a special relation?

Thus I maintain that Raskolnikov's action is justifiable, and I base this on the confusion that exists between what one would be inclined to do in a given situation and what one morally ought to do. The fact is that we simply have no clue how we would react in the situation described, however, we are more apt to make a rational moral judgment in our "armchair" observation about what is right when we are not personally involved in the heat of the action. But this is a moral pitfall for we should not expect of someone their best moral deliberation when their very lives are at stake.

I also find Raskolnikov's action defensible based on our tendency to accept general moral principles in justifying our particular moral evaluation. Consider for example if I hate my colleague Prava and wish him dead by putting poison in his food and thereby killing him. Susan on the other hand, may also wish him dead and one day witnesses Prava accidentally putting poison in his own food. At this point Susan has the antidote, but decides not to give it to him knowing that she is the only one able to save him. She therefore lets him die. Is her failure to act just as bad as mine?

Regardless of how one chooses to describe Susan's action, most will agree that her action is morally equivalent to mine. However, some may describe my action as that of killing while Susan's is one of letting someone die. Whatever the interpretation, I maintain that there is no morally relevant distinction between the notions of killing and of letting someone die. That being the case, the old pawnbroker is just as guilty as Raskolnikov. She was "letting him die" by

charging over-the-head prices, by reporting his I.O.U.s to charge officers and by her constant threats to get him kicked out of his apartment. She failed to observe Raskolnikov's needs and consequently was killing him. She, in effect, was killing him before he could kill her!

People may be misguided in knowing or having reasons as to why they hold the moral beliefs they do, however they could be quite capable of defending them. This takes me back to the point that I indicated earlier. I want to take a critical stance towards Raskolnikov's change of character, whereby he becomes a projection of his subjective turmoil and feels loneliness and estrangement even from his family. Raskolnikov, after having committed the crime, has a change of heart. He feels guilty and is only able to communicate and finally confess to another disgraced soul, a prostitute called Sonia. Raskolnikov's hatred of the imbalances of the system, of the world in general, is suddenly turned inward, so that not only does he feel disgust and loathing toward everyone and everything, but to himself as well. And it is here that I would say that the author fails to depict a consistently committed character.

The author should have remembered that the reasons people offer in support of their beliefs/actions must always be evaluated on their own merits, even if these reasons do not motivate the acceptance of these beliefs/actions by others. What I mean is that, of course, people will often search for a good reason to justify their nonrationally perceived beliefs (nonrational because people often believe that there can never be a rational explanation for a crime). This is evident in Raskolnikov's inconsistency in the motivation of his crime. But let us not forget that they may very well find that justification in the end. We ought, therefore, to continue to find the reasons given as satisfactory and as motivating the acceptance of the beliefs/actions they support even without the further 'push' of the nonrational factors that previously motivated them.

EVERYTHING IS NOT PERMITTED?

So why should Raskolnikov repent and all his freedom of action disappear? Suddenly he feels himself a louse like all the rest as he is engulfed by remorse. "Did I murder the old woman? I murdered myself, not her! I crushed myself once and for all, for ever." (Dostoevsky, 1993: 305) His experiment with "beyond good and evil" sends him craving for remorse, of making amendments to the world, to humanity. It is in prison that our hero finally starts making some sense of kinship with all of humanity. What does this transformation suggest?

The answer, I suppose, is: "Everything is not permitted". Although man is free, he is also responsible, whether it is to a supreme being, himself or to his fellow men. If there is no God, he becomes the God. Understood thus, then there can be no crime, for crime is brought about by the capacity for absolute freedom. It is through freedom that evil arises of which man is responsible. According to Dostoevsky (and illustrated through Raskolnikov), man is able to regenerate and redeem only through suffering. For this, suffering is the consequence for one who misused his freedom. However, I believe that one is "condemned to be free" and is, thus, the sole foundation of his values; nothing justifies one in adopting this or that particular value.

Why should Raskolnikov need the support of a social faith when he sets out entirely on his own, cut off from any social effort or collective historical action to remove certain obstacles? He broke once and for all what needed to be broken, for not only did he kill an old woman, but also the principle of authority reinforced and embraced by the moral law. Naturally we seek pleasure and avoid pain. Happiness, as generally understood, seems to have been Raskolnikov's primary and sole motive. But happiness demands of us the energy to will all that we will, and this

recognizes various contents which, because of the imperfection of human freedom, extend to the ultimate end (the end being death if life does cease at all).

For some people, happiness is found in wealth and for others, like Raskolnikov, in power, while for others again it is in simple pleasure. However, some contents are such that the idea of happiness applies to them smoothly and in agreement, while others seem to revolt against it so that, when happiness is placed against them, it feels as if it is not happiness but something else that is striven for. Raskolnikov was in a quest for power. Happiness is the all-embracing and naturally determined object of all acts of will. As such, it is improper to set in opposition happiness and power which was Raskolnikov's goal, since nobody seeks power except in so much as he places his happiness in it.

What is right in Raskolnikov's experience? I do not think I would know until I should be in such a situation myself. Then I would be able to discover what certain things mean to me, as well as how much they mean. Only then would I be able to empathize with certain individuals, for in a situation where one is forced to choose between different options, there lies a discovery of one's own true moral values and their relative importance.

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CHAPTER V
A WRONG WAY: FROM BEING TO HAVING IN THE
AFRICAN VALUE SYSTEM
SYMPHORIEN NTIBAGIRIRWA

African society is in a moral crisis. While it can competently be defended that this moral crisis is a result of an identity crisis (Tshibangu, 1977: 29ff; Oduyoye, 1986:54; Ujomu, 1997; Magesa, 1999:235), the African identity crisis is, in fact, part of the moral crisis. I will argue here that the moral crisis comes from the fact that Africans have shifted away from their own value system and the moral values that go with it, to other value systems underpinned by other metaphysical foundations. This shift has two aspects. The first aspect is the fact that the leaders and scholars of the African independence and post-independence era have betrayed the African value system by analyzing it with socio-economic and political implications that are drawn from a different value system, namely Marxism. The second aspect is the fact that Africans are now engaged in the process of completely abandoning their value system by trying to embrace another value system, namely, liberalism which is articulated in Kantianism or/and utilitarianism. In both shifts, what has been neglected is to pause a bit for serious reflection and appreciation of what the African value system could offer.

It is true that some modernists could argue that modernism, which glorifies individual reason and autonomy and, therefore, challenges the prevailing social order and authority, was so powerful that the apparent precarious African value system would not have resisted and cannot still resist. In fact, Anthony Giddens has recently argued that modernism is producing a global civilization, a global culture (Giddens, 1990, 1991). Maybe Africans should like to give away their value system that is local and particular in view of the global culture and civilization. In any case, the attempt to do so has failed, and seems to be failing once more as is obvious in the parlous economic, social and political parlous state of the African continent. It is not in the scope of this paper to give an account of the power and the effect of modernism in the African society, whatever it is. Rather I intend to take a critical look at the ways in which African society has moved away from its own value system and the consequence of this shift and to try to see whether we can re-appreciate and to draw a mode of life from this re-appreciation.

The consequence of the shift in values is that the African is no longer defined by what he is but by what he has acquired by whatever means. The question, therefore, is how the moral crisis caused by this shift can be dealt with. I shall argue that virtue ethics could help us to redeem the African value system, as well as the individual, from moral crisis in so far as it seems to be an ethic of being which flourishes in the community and is geared to the reconstruction of the human being as a being-with-self (*umuntu w'ubuntu*) and a being-with/in-others (*umuntu mu bantu*).

The question of whether the recovery of the African value system yields a socio-economic and political arrangement cannot but be left in its own matrix. Yet, the motive behind my reflection is to show that there is a continuity between ethics and socio-economic and political arrangements. First and foremost virtue ethics is intended to provide a society in which citizens live meaningful social and political lives. Therefore, in this kind of society the expansion of the market and the maximal profit which are central to the present international order are not the end in themselves but a means to human ends.

Accordingly, this paper will be divided in three sections. In the first section, I give a brief presentation of the ontology that underlies the traditional African value system. The second section will deal with the decadence of the African traditional ethical system. The third section will deal with virtue ethics as a remedy to the moral crisis in African society via the moral reconstruction of the individual.

THE ONTOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE AFRICAN VALUE SYSTEM

The African value system cannot be fully understood and appreciated outside the way we conceive the human being in the universe, on the one hand, and among others, on the other hand. The way we understand the human being in his universe and among others cannot be divorced from the Bantu ontology or notion of being. I am aware that there is a controversy regarding whether this Bantu ontology should be generalized to the whole of Africa South of the Sahara, or whether it should be limited simply to the Bantu people, who are mostly found in Africa south of the Equator. In his *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de l'Etre*, A. Kagame (1956) extends Bantu ontology as peculiar to the Africans in the south of the Equator or around it; whereas Janheinz Jahn, in his book, *Muntu* (1961), applies the Bantu ontology to all Africans south of the Sahara. This debate does not fit in the scope of this reflection. Suffice it to note that the religious, social and ethical implications of Bantu ontology seem to be widely spread in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The African is often defined as a social being in constant communion with other beings. The African is a *ntu* in the universe of *ntu* (Kagame, 1975; Mulago, 1965; Tshiamalenga, 1975; Mujyinya, 1972). This universe could schematically be outlined as follows (See Kagame, 1956:120):

Being singular plural Meaning
mu-ntu ba-ntu Rational being, anything that has intelligence: human being whether living or dead or yet to come.
Some scholars include God in this category (See Tempels, 1959: 41ff; Tshiamalenga, 1975: 161)
Ntu ki-ntu bi-ntu Inanimate beings, or beings without intelligence (animals, plants, stones, etc.)
ku-ntu ku-ntu Modal being, the way things are (position, quality, action, relation, quantity, passion, possession)
ha-ntu ha-ntu Spatiality/ temporality

The African is defined by the interaction with these different *ntu* or beings. He or she works in such a way that there is harmony in the universe of beings (cf. Jahn, 1961: 96ff, Adesanya, 1958: 39f). There is harmony when there is a balance or equilibrium of force between different beings. Even fear can contribute to the establishment of harmony. When Placide Tempels (1959) equated the Bantu notion of being with force (vital force), he was picturing the kind of interaction or the kind of relationship that exists in the Bantu universe of *ntu* or being. Of course, there is some reality in what Tempels wrote, namely, that the *ntu* of Bantu ontology is more

dynamic than the static being of the so-called perennial classical philosophy of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. According to Alexis Kagame, being is defined not *a priori* by considering its essence, but *a posteriori* by considering its way of acting, the way it interacts with other *ntu* in its universe. *Mu-ntu* is a being which acts by intelligence; *ki-ntu* interacts without the use of intelligence; *ha-ntu* is the localizing being; *ku-ntu* is the modal being: it indicates the way things are or should be (Kagame, 1975:102). It is in this interaction, in this dynamics that the African conception of the community is grounded.

But the concern here is not to reflect on some cosmological ethics, but to give a general background against which one could understand the traditional African value system in its communitarian and socio-ethical character. Thus, the next point I want to explore is the notion of the *mu-ntu* – the being gifted with intelligence among other *bantu* or beings with intelligence.

There is a general agreement among Africans, and even non-African scholars on the fact that the African cannot be defined except in reference to the community. Of course, most of them did not articulate it as an ontology as some Bantu philosophers tried to do. It was taken for granted as a result of empirical observation. Even some thinkers who later were to become political leaders (like Senghor, Nkrumah, and even Nyerere) simply noted the fact that the community was central in the African value system without going more deeply into its ontological foundation. This in itself constitutes a betrayal of the African value system, for one cannot appreciate the interaction between the individual and the community before reflecting on the ultimate foundations that underlies it.

The relationship between the individual and the community, or the social nature of the African, has its roots deep in the ontology I have just articulated. This relationship has been expressed differently. We could recall for instance, Mbiti's "I am because we are, since we are therefore I am." Or the Zulu/Xhosa: *umuntu ngunmuntu ngabantu*. Though, in apparently political terms and for political purposes, L. S. Senghor had also argued that the African society is communal more because it is a communion of souls than an aggregate of individuals (Senghor, 1964:49). What this means is that as far as the African value system is concerned, the reality of the community takes precedence over the reality of the individual. According to Ifeanyi Menkiti, the primacy of the community over the individual has an epistemic consequence. It is thanks to the centrality of the community that the individual has epistemic accessibility to his own self. He puts it thus:

It is in rooted-ness in an ongoing human community that the individual comes to see himself as a man, and it is by first knowing this community as a stubborn reality and perduring fact of the psychological world that the individual also comes to know himself as a durable, more or less permanent fact of this world. (Menkiti, 1984: 171-2).

According to Gyekye, the sense of the community that characterises relations among individuals is a direct consequence of communitarian social arrangements (Gyekye, 1998: 318). For K. Dickson, the sense of the community is what defines Africanness (Dickson, 1977: 4). Of course, this sounds simplistic in that it is rather the ontology that lies behind the community and defines it that, in turn, defines Africanness. In other words, it is because I am a *mu-ntu* in a universe of *ba-ntu* that I belong to the community; and the community and the way I live in it define my Africanness.

From an ethical and structural viewpoint, the primacy of the community means that the community alone constitutes the context, the social and the cultural space in which the individual

can realize oneself. In other words, the community is prior to the individual in so far as it is the medium through which the individual person works out and chooses one's goals and life plans, one's values and ends. A person is constituted by social relationships in which one necessarily finds oneself (Gyekye, 1998:320).

However, whether the community has been appreciated from an ontological ground or taken for granted as factual, it should be noted that African scholars and leaders failed to consider seriously the communitarian and socio-ethical character of the African value system as a system sufficient in itself. The moral decadence we live in today comes from the fact that Africans have moved away from their value system. The first was by thinking that because the African value system is socio-ethically communitarian, it was therefore a sure ground of Marxist socialism. But Marxist socialism has its own metaphysical foundation different from that of Africa. The second seems to be the consequence of the first. With the collapse of Marxist socialism in the Soviet Union and its satellites, Africans have embraced, or are in process of embracing liberalism central to the capitalist system. This also is grounded on metaphysical ground equally different from that of Africans.

MOVING AWAY FROM AFRICAN-NESS: MARXISM AND LIBERALISM

The African value system has been used by most African scholars and political leaders of the independence era as a justification for their ideological choice of Marxist socialism. In fact, some of them were Marxist socialist before. This seems to be the case for Aimé Césaire and L.S. Senghor who, during their studies or careers, already belonged to the Communist Party in France. In fact, Tsenay Serequeberhan has accused African scholars who later became leaders in independent Africa as having done nothing more than universalizing Europe while they subordinated Africa. Accordingly, their efforts ended in ontologizing eurocentric ideas projected and presented as the African's own self-conception (Serequeberhan, 1994:43 and 47).

In the course of his stay in France, we could see that Senghor transformed Mbiti's "I am therefore we are and since we are therefore I am" into the existential Sartrean thesis: *I am what I have decided to be*. This means that Senghor, for instance, had already decided for himself and his country to be Marxist socialist without pausing to see whether there could be an alternative which the African value system could offer, in case Marxist socialism might be found inadequate. Marxist socialism became at the same time a method for analysing the African value system. As Senghor said, "*We are socialist because we accept Marx and Engels, and believe in the usefulness of their analysis of societies*" (in Mudimbe, 1988:93). The consequence of this was that the idea of community, the principle of harmony between human being and nature, the vision of a unitary universe could no longer be seen on an African metaphysical basis, but was seen with Marxism as a method. In other words, the African value system ceased to be an entity on its own. Nkrumah Nkrumah, in choosing socialism thus argued, "If one seeks the socio-political ancestor of socialism, one must go to communalism. In socialism, the principles underlying communalism are given expression in modern circumstances." (Nkrumah, 1964:73)

The fact that African value system is socio-ethically communitarian does not necessarily suggest that the socio-economic and political arrangement that results from it is Marxist socialism. In fact, Nkrumah's analysis, not less than that of Senghor did not go beyond the fact that the Marxism he was defending was part of the prevailing international developments in the aftermath of the World War II. He could not imagine that there could be other alternative(s) that could be provided by reflecting, for instance, on the African value system outside the Marxist

metaphysical framework. In fact, I would go as far as saying that socialism as it was presented to the world was more concerned with economic means of production and competition than the liberation of a class of people from exploitation by another class.

The situation that Africans faced at that time was not that of capital and value and the alienation of human beings that result from it; it was not the problem of human beings becoming a means of production and strangers vis-à-vis of the product of their work. Instead, it was colonization according to which African people had no culture and civilization. This presumption did not produce the material alienation with which Marxists were concerned, but a spiritual alienation which needed to be addressed in the colonized and neo-colonized Africa. Thus, ironically, by defending and appropriating Marxism, Nkrumah, Senghor and other African Marxists seemed to prove true the very thesis which was the ground of colonization. In fact, one can but ask whether by choosing Marxism African scholars were not suggesting another way of being colonized, rather than considering some aspect of the African value system (cf. Serequeberhan, 1994:42)!

The African value system is not concerned with the modes of production and material alienation, it is concerned primarily with human beings in their relationships with one another in the community and in their natural environment (cf. Makhudu, 1993:40-1). Scholars and leaders like Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere seem to have been aware of this distinction even though, in the end they practised socialism in Marxist-Leninist fashion. Kaunda depicts the distinction when he wrote:

Zambia can say with pride that its humanism is originally based very much on the importance of man. In this case the state cares for man, the person. He, in return, as an individual will, or at least is expected to, care for his neighbour, thereby caring for the state. (Kaunda, 1976:12)

What is depicted in Kaunda's understanding of African society is the mutual aid community. The fact that it is a mutual aid society does not mean that it is necessarily a ground of socialism or communism. In fact, it can be argued that socialism and capitalism coexist side-by-side. As Kaunda has once again observed:

Our ancestors worked collectively and cooperatively from start to finish. One might say this was a communist way of doing things and yet these gardens remained strongly the property of individuals. One might say here that this was capitalism. Collectively and cooperatively they harvested but when it came to storing and selling their produce they became strongly individualistic. When it came to sharing the fruits of their labour like meals, for instance, they shared communally. (Kaunda, 1976:13)

We can see here that things were done collectively and held individually to safeguard both the human being as an individual and at the same time the importance of the centrality of the community.

Julius Nyerere tried to distinguish between socialism and African values. He argued that in African socialism, what is important is not socialism, but African. In nearly the same argumentation as that of Kaunda, he argued that Africans need not convert to socialism or to democracy because the traditional African experience is socialist and democratic. If I may say from this point of view, Kaunda and Nyerere did not betray the African value system as much as

did Senghor and Nkrumah. Nevertheless, the context in which they operated was such that in practice they were first Marxists who tried to apply the principles of socialism as they were offered by the international ordering. Probably out of doubt, distrust, and insufficient appreciation of Africans' own individuality and possibilities instilled by colonization, they tried to indigenise Marxism (Onigu, 1978:17) without, albeit, being aware of the totalitarian and other contradictions attached to it.

In the end, there was nothing African in the kind of politics that was going on, nor does anything Marxist remain. When socialism was challenged by the triumph of liberalism and collapsed, even socialism in Africa collapsed. Yet one would have expected that since African socialism does not have the same metaphysical background as does Western Socialism, the collapse of the latter would not involve the collapse of the former.

While the African political leaders and scholars were embracing Marxist socialism, they did so by criticizing liberalism. For them, this criticism was intended to try to reintegrate the African in the community because, they argued, colonialism had destroyed the African community, such that the individual was no longer taking seriously the communitarian character of African society. The individual who chooses his own ends and values, unconstrained by any externalities is, as MacIntyre (1981) puts it, the Kantian subject.

Thomas Blakeley argues that the first serious European penetration in Africa was the work of Kantians, just as industrialization, which was to become the model of Africa, occurred in a Kantian context. By the same token, he argues that the universities of the African continent were staffed predominantly by Kantians and Neo-Kantians (Blakeley 1984:166). This may sound like an exaggeration, since we cannot neglect the importance of most Christian missionaries who held view other than Kantian, such as Thomism. Yet the focal point is that the era Africans entered since colonization is modernism in which the individual is free from any externalities: social authority, divine authority, and society itself. In short, the true modern individual is supposed to be democratic in a democratic society.

A glance at the current world order seems to show that the world is obviously moving towards a political universalism centred on liberal democracy (political liberalism) which is the political ideology of liberal economy. The philosophical trends that underlie liberal democracy are Kantianism or/and utilitarianism². Elsewhere I have argued that these two ethical currents have left societies in a moral crisis which has social and political implications.³ This moral crisis comes from the fact that these ethical theories leave human societies divided by emphasizing the individuals' freedom to choose their own values and ends.⁴

Now Africans, who hitherto criticized the liberal system as destructive of their society, embrace this very system, and to such a point that they abandon the communitarian character of the Africa value system, or at least what was remaining of its legacy. We have embraced or are embracing the kind of liberal society defended by Kantians and Utilitarians. Accordingly, we seem to be living in a kind of society wherein everything is permitted in the name of individual freedom and autonomy. This freedom and autonomy, which often are abused, are seldom balanced by individual responsibility.

Kantianism and utilitarianism seem to have attained their climax in the present age of economic globalization. Individual freedom and autonomy in determining one's own ends and values are now translated in terms of the expansion of the market and the pursuit of maximal profit. The consequence of this new phenomenon is that, on the one hand, everything including human beings becomes a commodity, and on the other hand, there is a material alienation of some (human beings seen solely as purely means of production) and a spiritual alienation of

others (the expansion of the market and the profit it yields become an end in itself, rather than a means to an end). While the expansion of the market and the pursuit of the maximal profit are a means of survival, the consequence of this new phenomenon is that we are defined no longer according to what we are, but according to what we have or are in the process of acquiring.

Africans have entered this kind of society first through different economic conditions (liberalization of the economy), and secondly through political conditions (political liberalization). Once again, no sufficient reflection on the African value system in itself has been made in order to see what it can offer. As far as economic and political liberalization are concerned, it would seem as if it is our material survival that is at stake. I would argue instead that this survival does not mean that Africans should lose what defines them, what makes them who they are. In other words, survival does not mean that they should lose their identity. Instead, what and who we are should give a key to how we should survive. Mbigi Lovemore suggests that for Africans fully to participate in the global arena, they need to draw upon their spiritual and social heritage (Mbigi and Maree, 1995:4).

The universal and the particular do not exclude each other. That we are entering the age of economic and, apparently, political universalism should not prevent Africans from redefining themselves on their own ontological foundation, rather than jumping on what is offered by other metaphysical grounds. I have no doubt that a redefinition of Africans on the basis of their own ontology could be their contribution to the world, for it is not enough for us to claim that we are Africans if we are not giving to the world the implications of our African-ness.

So far the point is that Africans have moved away from their own value system, defined on an African ontology, by embracing the economic, social and political arrangements derived from Western metaphysical grounds. Basically, the focus of the African value system is the human being as a community being, who, without losing one's personal identity and morality, values one's relationships with others. My suggestion is that virtue ethics can help redefine the African as a community being, who, in turn, can chart a way back to the ultimate African foundation of his being. In other words, virtue ethics is a means to educate the African on how to find the source of the self, and to make it a contribution to the world in which we live today.

THE CASE OF VIRTUE ETHICS

Virtue ethics has attracted many thinkers in various societies throughout human history. These include Confucius in Ancient China, Buddha in Ancient India, as well as such various philosophers as Socrates and Aristotle in ancient Greece. In contemporary moral philosophy a renewed interest in virtue ethics has been revived by such thinkers as Philippa Foot (1972, 1978), James Wallace (1978), Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), Roger Crisp (1996), and G.E.M. Anscombe (1958) to name but a few. Among African scholars, we may include the defenders of the *ubuntu* philosophy such as Makhundu (1993), and Mbigi Lovemore (1992, 1995). Though these latter have not claimed that they are virtue ethicists, I list them so by extension.

What is virtue ethics? Virtue ethics is an agent-based ethics, as opposed to Kantian and Utilitarian ethical traditions which are act-based ethics. The latter are ethics of doing, whereas virtue ethics is the ethics of being (Trianoski, 1990; Mayo, 1993; Loudon, 1997:210). Virtue ethics teaches people not what to do and how to do it, but what kind of person one is called to be and how one should live for oneself and for others, given who one is (Statman, 1997; cf. *Nichomachean Ethics* 1169a). It is concerned not much with how to do well but how to be good.

Because virtue ethics is an ethic of being, it is relevant for the moral reconstruction of the individual-self, on the one hand, and as a community-self, on the other hand. We will treat each in turn.

First, the African needs to be reconstructed as a being-with-self (*umuntu w'ubuntu*). By being-with-self⁵, I mean the individuality of the person, a person who has a *chez-soi*, one's constancy as Paul Ricoeur would say. Some non-African scholars often nourished a fear that the communitarian character of the African value system could deprive the individual of freedom and responsibility. Effectively, most of the scholars and fathers of African independence tended to take African communitarianism in an unrestricted and hard way in order to defend their choice of socialism (Gyekye, 1998:319).

Even if it were the case that African communitarianism is unrestricted, we need to find a way in which freedom and responsibility are made the inner side of moral virtue. In inculcating such virtues as self-control, humility, prudence, moderation, faithfulness, magnanimity towards others, and reference to the society in one's choice of one's ends and values, African society was educating a person on how to manage one's freedom and responsibility in society. In particular, this was a society in which an individual cannot be conceived apart from one's relationships with others (Kigongo, 1988:15). Thus, to say that freedom and responsibility are the inner side of the moral virtue is to say that in acting the virtuous individual engages himself in a process of deliberation, weighing different choices, appreciating the circumstances and the relevance of his actions for his own good and the good of the community.

The second dimension of the reconstruction of the African refers to being-with/in-others (*umu-ntu mu ba-ntu*). With the notion of being-with-self, I have reconstructed individuality in the African context. Now with the notion of being-with/in-others, I want to reconstruct the individual in one's harmony and solidarity with others, harmony and solidarity being central concepts in the African value system (Ruch & Anyanwu, 1984: 141). By being-with/in-others (*umu-ntu-mu-ba-ntu*) I mean sociality, solidarity, togetherness, the community-being of the person. This means that, in so far as one belongs to the community, one cannot define one's goals and ends without reference (at least implicitly) to the community (cf. Gyekye, 1997:38). In fact, according to J. Mbiti, the human being cannot develop and achieve the fullness of one's potentiality without relationships with other individuals.

Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people.
(Mbiti, 1969:141)

Because the African value system is both anthropocentric and sociocentric as Kayolo Kigongo (1988:15) puts it, to conceive the human as being-with/in-others is another way of re-locating or rather leading the individual into the African value system. It is a way of expressing the sociality of the African.

Such is the anthropological backbone from which I would like to reconstruct the individual and lead one to one's African value system. Whether the African value system I have just defined will yield a different socio-economic and political arrangement which is not imported remains a question that needs seriously to be explored. Neither the Marxist socialism which animated the optimism of the independence and post-independence era, nor the political pluralism and its corresponding economic neoliberalism of the present time (which seems to be the only present resort), were deduced from the African value system; they are both acquired

external injunctions. When the imported arrangements and methods turn out to be unhelpful, the only viable solution is to come back and ask what one's own value system can offer once it is rediscovered as the constitution of one's being. In fact, this adventure should be seen in the line of:

An exploration of the concrete process by which the Being (i.e, the freedom) of the African existence (i.e, its historicity) can be reclaimed and established anew out of the exigencies of the present. (Serequeberhan, 1994:10)

NOTES

1. Placide Tempels argued that for the bantu, being is force and force is being (Tempels 1959:34-35). As some bantu philosophers have tried to demonstrate, Tempels was mistaken because force might be an attribute of being and not its definition. For instance, Alexis Kagame and Tshiamalenga Ntumba have tried to use linguistic analysis in order to show the true conception of being in bantu philosophy. Kagame found four categories of being that are amenable to the ten Aristotelian categories (one substance and nine accidents).

2. Some version of utilitarianism takes this good to be the aggregate of individual utilities. This may mean that utilitarianism is necessarily individualist, as it could be regarded as majoritarianist. However, the aggregation of individual utilities could provide an implicit ground on which individualism could develop (see MacPherson 1973:173).

3. See Ntibagirirwa, S 1999. *A Retrieval of Aristotelian Virtue Ethics in African Social and Political Humanism: A Communitarian Perspective*. M.A. Thesis. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg (unpublished).

4. A number of contemporary philosophers, particularly among communitarian and virtue ethicists have been surprised by the fact that liberal philosophers are silent about what might be done to foster the unity of a society. Glendon (1991) has pointed out the litigiousness of the liberal society in which individual rights are placed at the summit of the normative pyramid. In the same way, MacIntyre has reacted against Kantian ethics. According to him, if each moral agent can now speak unconstrained by the externalities of divine law (against Christian ethics), natural teleology (against Aristotelian ethics), and against hierarchical authority, why and how should anyone else listen to him (MacIntyre, 1982: 66). No community can be built on Kantianism.

5. My concept of being-with-self could be compared with Paul Ricoeur's concept of *idem* (the same) and *ipse* (the self, of the self, by oneself). By *idem*, Ricoeur means a permanence in time that depends on an unchanging core of sameness. As for *ipse*, Ricoeur means the selfhood that accommodates change over time and is constituted in relation to what is other than self. For Ricoeur, *idem* and *ipse* overlap in the phenomenon of character as the lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized (Ricoeur, 1992: 121).

Self-constancy is for each person that manner of conducting himself or herself so that others count on that person. Because someone is counting on me, I am accountable for my actions before another. The term "responsibility" unites both meanings: counting on/being accountable for. It unites them, adding to them the idea of a response to the question "where are you?" asked by another who needs me. This response is the

following: here I am!, a statement that is a statement of self-constancy. (Ricoeur, 1992: 165).

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CHAPTER VI
A QUESTION MARK AGAINST UBUNTU:
COMPARISONS WITH RUSSIAN COMMUNITARIANS
OLGA YURKIVSKA

This paper presents a comparative study of Russian and African thinkers on communitarian philosophy and ethics. The ideas of Ubuntuism as an African philosophy of life are analysed through the philosophy of Russian *obschina* (the traditional peasant community), as reflected in the views of Khomyakov, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy. The analysis shows that despite some historical and cultural differences there are notable similarities between the main features of *ubuntu* and *obschina*. These include a strong and rather special spirituality, collective consciousness, emphasis on the values of co-operation, sharing, participation, reciprocity, empathy, harmony with nature, and so on. The latter strongly suggests that the history and downfall of the Russian *obschina* and the Soviet *collective* could be of great theoretical and practical interest in contemporary Africa, even though the lessons it teaches could be seen as rather trivial: a) any concept if taken out of its historical, socio-economic, and cultural context could become open to idealisation, distortion, and abuse; b) in order to determine the viability of the concept in the current situation, its true meaning should be analysed from the perspective of its origins and socio-economic foundations; c) communalism for its own sake cannot and should not be the ultimate goal, since its value is determined by the nature of the community in question.

I will start with outlining the basic views of *Ubuntu*.¹

- *Ubuntu* as an African philosophy of life or an African world view occupies a special position and is usually opposed to Western individualism and socialist collectivism alike.
- *Ubuntu* as an African humanism is often defined as the distinctive collective consciousness of Africans.
- Most authors consider *Ubuntuism* as inseparable from religious beliefs, and almost unanimously claim that Africans have religion of their own.
- As ‘profound spiritual/religious experience’, African humanism is described as being primarily emotional and as such is opposed to rationalism as the core of Western humanism.
- The ethical values and virtues of *Ubuntuism* are plentiful and vary from author to author: but the most frequently mentioned are those of solidarity, respect, sharing, loyalty, co-operation, participation, reciprocating, sympathy and empathy.
- *Ubuntu* has its roots in traditional African (tribal) society. It had no written records in the past and was handed on by oral tradition. It has been revived and articulated by the academics and politicians in recent years, and is, therefore, open to different interpretations.

OBSCHINA AS AN ETHICAL IDEAL

To draw the parallels between *Ubuntu* and the philosophy of *Obschina* we shall need a brief look into Russian history and philosophy in the second part of the 19th century. While Western Europe was fast developing industrial capitalism, Russia was still in the clutches of monarchy, feudalism and an agricultural economy (serfdom had been abolished only in 1861, the event

marking the beginning of the capitalist epoch). The literary and philosophical scene of that time has been characterised by the battle of so-called *Westernisers* and *Slavophiles*².

The latter attempted to substantiate the idea of an original, genuinely Russian way of social development, which would be totally different from that of the Western European. The originality of Russia was seen in the absence of class struggle in its history; in the Russian village commune (*obshchina*) and, so called, *artels*; and in Orthodoxy, which was believed to be the only true form of Christianity. All *Slavophiles* fanatically believed in the virtues of the common people, "folk principles" and the values of communal life. The greatest name among Slavophiles was undoubtedly Khomyakov. He asserted that one-sided Western rationalism and individualism led to the loss of a person's spiritual integrity (which, according to him, lay in the unity of reason, feeling and will, and was inseparable from faith). Against it, Khomyakov asserted what Russian Orthodoxy had, in *sobornost*, the authentic spirit of community in which there was a true freedom for the individual. According to him, the Orthodox Church alone knew true freedom and true community. *Sobornost* is a notion coined by Khomyakov from such Russian words as *sobor* (cathedral) and *sobranie* (gathering of fellow men) and encompasses the ideas of free unity, spirituality, and harmony, which according to him were the unique characteristics of the Russian spirit and were found in the traditional Russian rural commune – *obshchina*.

In the *obshchina* he saw a harmonious social organisation devoid of conflicts, a form of true fellowship, a "true unity" based on the common use of land, mutual agreement, community of religion, tradition, and custom that precluded both self-willed individualism and its restraint by coercion. He also maintained that *obshchina*, governed by its assembly, the *Mir*,³ was the germ of a new democracy. He was very fond of the idea, so common in Russia, that only decisions reached unanimously (*Vsem Mirom*) are truly democratic and binding upon the conscience of the individual. He had high praise for the *artels*, which were small groups of craftsmen running a business together and sharing their work, equipment, and profits. Though Khomyakov considered this way of life to be uniquely Russian, he saw in it a gift worthy of sharing with the whole world. The West was to learn from Russia the secret of a truly communal way of life.⁴

This messianic note, the emphasis on the "universally human mission of the Russian people," was much stronger in Dostoevsky than in classical *Slavophilism*. Dostoevsky believed that the unification by Russia of all the Slavic people⁵ would pronounce "a new word" that would bring about the rebirth and salvation of humankind. He attempted to clarify and promote the particularly Russian ideal of humanism as totally different to that of the West, which he accused of reducing human complexity to a shabby common denominator or, more likely, being simply a disguise for the desire to force everyone into the same mould. His idea of *vsechelovek* ("all-human-man") emphasised the integrated and fully fulfilled personality achievable only through harmonious communion with others.

This typical antithesis of European and Russian values is a recurrent theme of Dostoevsky's writings. In the essay cycle, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863), based on his travels in Western Europe, Dostoevsky presented a critical view of capitalist civilisation, with its extreme rationalisation of life, the "colossal regimentation" and growing atomisation of society. In these essays Dostoevsky shows an unusually acute insight into the fact that it was the divisive power of bourgeois individualism that provided the driving force for Western civilisation. Individualism had created a powerful material force, but at the same time had isolated human beings, had brought them into conflict with nature and their fellow men. He emphasised the dehumanising

power of bourgeois individualism and the negative character of bourgeois freedom, which resulted in a diminished personality.

Against the rational egoism of European capitalism, Dostoevsky set the ideal of the authentic fraternal community preserved in Orthodoxy and Russian folk traditions. There is no antagonism between an individual and community as the individual submits to it totally without setting conditions or calculating the advantages involved, while the community grants one freedom, full self-realisation and safety guaranteed by fraternal love.⁶

Another attack on the individualism and mechanistic rationalism of Western capitalism could be found in *Notes from the Underground*. In the form of a satire Dostoevsky portrays the irrational ultra-individualism of the "underground man" who has rejected all social bonds and is an embodiment of a protest against any subordination of "what is most precious and most important to us, namely our personality and individuality." "Is the world to go to wrack and ruin or am I to have my cup of tea? Well, so far as I'm concerned, blow the world so long as I can have my cup of tea" (1864; 136) – is his motto in life.

It is worth noting that according to Dostoevsky, the rationalisation of the social bonds was common to both Western capitalism and socialism. "Shigalev's system" in *The Possessed* is a gloomy version of a society based on absolute obedience and absolute depersonalisation and is a caricature version of what Dostoevsky called materialistic or revolutionary socialism.

A modified and nobler version of Shigalev's system is presented in the famous *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*. The *Legend* was intended to be a parable of the just kingdom the socialists were trying to establish on earth. The Grand Inquisitor exchanges freedom for bread, and takes away freedom in order to bestow happiness on his "pitiful children." However, an indispensable condition of this happiness is total and herdlike depersonalisation. Knowing that men are weak, the Inquisitor relieves them from the burden of freedom, conscience, and personal responsibility; he replaces freedom by authority, "free unity" by a "unity based on compulsion". The Church, transformed into State, unites "all in one unanimous and harmonious ant heap."

According to Andrzej Walicki (1980: 319), the notion that there was an organic relationship between Catholicism and socialism, emphasised in the *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, was one of Dostoevsky's favourite and most obsessive theories. He called socialism, as protest against individualism and anarchy, a secularised form of the Catholic "unity through compulsion" (Walicki: 319). Dostoevsky uses the term "Russian socialism" to describe the ideals he attributed to Russian people – "the ideals of the state as church (in opposition to the Catholic ideal of the church as state), of universal brotherhood, and the free unity of mankind." By the state he definitely meant the Russian nation, and the latter for him was synonymous with common people of peasant *obshchina*. Therefore, the cornerstone of Dostoevsky's Orthodox utopia was the idea of a return to the people, to the "native soil," to the free unity and traditions of Russian communal life.

Tolstoy's philosophical ideas revolve around and evolve from the existential and moral crisis he experienced at the peak of his creative genius. During the crisis he went through a period of severe cynicism and depression, and seriously contemplated suicide. Analysing the roots of the crisis he realised that they were in the system of values he shared with the Russian aristocracy. In his *Confession* he pointed out that the whole system was based on hypocrisy and extreme individualism and resulted in life devoid of any meaning. From the perspective of individualistic morality, the inevitability of death made life a total absurdity, a cruel and stupid joke played on humanity. The meaning of life and death was of utmost interest and importance for Tolstoy, an obsession that was a torment of his life. It was personal, it was of a great

empirical interest for him as a novelist, observing and depicting life, and at the same time purely theoretical. In the story *Three Deaths* we already find the characteristic Tolstoyan contrast between the fear of death felt by the "upper classes" and the peaceful resignation of the simple people as they face the end. Condemnation of individualism runs as a continuous motif through *War and Peace*, where individualism is contrasted again and again with the instinctive "truth" of the common people. In the most condensed and graphic manner two opposite value systems, two ways of life, and two attitudes towards death are presented in the *Death of Ivan Ilyich*. In the *Confession* Tolstoy concludes that from the point of view of the individual clinging to the idea of personal survival, human existence must be summed up in the words "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The time- and space-bound individual cannot escape discovering his life being totally absurd; the way to salvation lies, consequently, in overcoming "the principle of individuation."

Having come to this conclusion, Tolstoy relates in the *Confession*, he set out to look for spiritual help from men of religious belief. At first he turned to men of his own circle, but soon he understood that their faith was not genuine, but hypocritical. He, therefore, "turned his eyes to the huge masses of simple, ignorant, and poor people" – pilgrims, monks and peasants, orthodox Christians, as well as Old Believers and sectarians. He realised that while, according to the rational understanding of learned people, life may be meaningless, the vast masses find meaning in life on the basis of instinctive and intuitive understanding of faith. He understood faith neither as a revelation nor as a belief in something supernatural. He also disagreed with the idea that faith could be reduced solely to man's relationship to God. For Tolstoy faith was a supra-rational insight into the meaning of human existence, thanks to which man does not annihilate himself. It is simply a universal wisdom, which proclaims that the world is governed by a superior will, and that he, who would understand its meaning, should bow before it.⁷

The best exposition of Tolstoy's philosophy of life can be found in his treatise *On Life*. "The true life of man," he writes, "is the aspiration toward goodness, which is achieved by submitting one's individuality to the law of reason" (1894: 86). It is time and space that lie at the roots of the "principle of individuation." It follows from this that to renounce individual welfare is not an act of exceptional merit, but a necessary law of life. In order to live a true life – not a life of animal instincts – it is necessary to be reborn and become a "reasonable consciousness," to transcend individuality by identifying one's own welfare with the welfare of others. Whoever achieves this finds that death no longer holds any terror and perceives the world as a reasonable whole, subject to a single law. Individual life is not a true life. Individuality is evil, an illusion that cuts man from his true nature, imprisons him in the world of phenomena and condemns him to suffering and death. The way to transcend individuality is through love – love not as an emotional impulse, but as a total submission to the tranquil clarity of the "reasonable consciousness" that enjoins men to renounce their individual welfare. The renunciation of "individual welfare" does not mean the renunciation of personality as such. True personality as a sense of identity, according to Tolstoy, could not be found in individual consciousness. One can become a true person only through others.

The Tolstoyan philosophy of life is rather extreme in its ethical implications. It postulates not only such values as empathy (ability to feel for others), non-violent resistance to evil, and love of one's fellow men, but also calls for ascetic resignation from the world. In practice it led him to the idealisation of the collective consciousness at the pre-individuation stage, to a cult of simplicity and to a condemnation of civilisation. Following his own call for humility in the face

of the "people's truth" and total immersion in the "masses", Tolstoy chose to live a life of Russian *obschina*.

The character who best exemplifies the "people's truth" is Karataev in *War and Peace* – a simple peasant who is only a small part of the anonymous crowd and feels that he has no separate existence. Pierre Bezukhov longs to experience Karataev's truth: "To be a soldier, simply a soldier," he muses before going to sleep. "To enter with all one's being this general life, to adopt the qualities that made them what they are. But how to throw off everything superfluous, demonic, this burden of the pseudo-man?" So, what are those qualities so much admired by Pierre in Karataev, which Tolstoy could not find in his aristocratic milieu. They are the universal wisdom preserved by tradition, a simple and at the same time extraordinary spirituality of folk faith in God, empathy and great tolerance, patience in the face of misfortune and sympathetic understanding of the needy, the quiet acceptance of life without despair and death without terror. To achieve them one has to forget one's own individuality, to abolish the barriers between the self and the other, and immerse in universal unity of love for one's fellow men.

Sometimes Tolstoy's philosophy of life is defined as metaphysical impersonalism (Zenkovsky, 1953: 387), with which I strongly disagree. I would have called it a philosophy of anti-individualism, which merges with communitarianism in its ethics. The reason (apart from its content speaking for itself) is that Tolstoy found inspiration for, and a confirmation of, his theories in Russian *obschina*, in the communal way of life based on patriarchal links, in the culture and social consciousness of Russian peasantry, who were still at the pre-individuation stage. Lenin called it a "shift to the position of the patriarchal peasantry" and maintained that Tolstoy's ideas should be treated "not as something individual, not as a caprice or a fad, but as the ideology of the conditions of life under which millions and millions actually found themselves for a certain period of time," as an ideology of Russian *obschina*, of "an Oriental, an Asiatic order." (Lenin, 1967: 66-67)

Tolstoy did not limit his praise of *obschina* only to its philosophy of life and ethics. He went further to an idealisation of its natural economy based on communal property and relations before the division of labour. In his infatuation with *obschina* Tolstoy rejected Western capitalism, revolutionary socialism, civilisation in general, and the culture of individualism as completely incompatible with the spiritual needs of humanity. In this wholesale condemnation he included contemporary science as well. The role of science, he wrote is to satisfy artificial needs and to create the means of control over the people. It is totally immoral, for it has lost sight of the only truly important issue – understanding the nature of man's vocation and the essence of virtue.

In his articles on Tolstoy, Lenin perceptively summed up that philosophy. As a thinker, he wrote, Tolstoy is great because his ideology is a reflection of the "great human ocean [of Russian peasantry], . . . with all its weaknesses and all its strong features" (Lenin, 1967: 63). At the same time he stressed that the Tolstoyan doctrine was certainly utopian and reactionary in its content. As an exponent of the feelings and aspirations of the patriarchal peasantry, Tolstoy looked backward rather than forward; he wanted to re-establish an archaic and pre-industrial way of life and openly proclaimed that "the ideal of our times is behind us."

CRITICAL COMMENTS ON THE RUSSIAN COMMUNITARIAN IDEAL

I hope that even this very brief summary shows the striking similarities between the ideas of Russian *obschina* and those of *Ubuntu*. It is clear that *obschina* was a way of life based on a particular form of social and economic relationships, which produced a particular world view and code of ethics. Its values were outlined in oral tradition and embodied in the customs which regulated social behaviour. Russian so-called intelligentsia (intellectuals of all kinds, like historians, literary critics, writers, and philosophers) have articulated its philosophy. And as you have seen from the above, each of them gave to it his own interpretation depending on his personal agenda, but all of them in a way expressed the sentiments, psychology, and philosophy of patriarchal peasantry. It was a standpoint of protest against advancing capitalism, its values, disorder and destruction of the traditional peasant life, and the impoverishment of the masses of peasants, who were uprooted, dispossessed of their land, and were rapidly losing their sense of identity in the face of alien values. An uncritical and inevitably idealised perception of the past tradition was a natural outcome of that protest. Andrzej Walicki describes it as "romantic nostalgia for a lost ideal" and goes even further to define Slavophile philosophy, in particular, as a conservative utopianism, which had "a strongly compensatory element, for dreams of a lost harmonious world always conceal some sense of alienation and deprivation"(1980: 107).

One of the contemporary movements, the so-called *narodniki* (from *narod*, which means people) saw in *obschina* an almost complete cell of socialist society. It believed that this would guarantee Russia an original way of historical progress, and would rescue peasants from the torturous process of capitalisation and socialist revolution. At the end of the 19th century, the dispute between *narodniki* and Russian Marxists under the leadership of Lenin became particularly acute. The degree of its intensity and importance to the future of Russia could be judged by the involvement of Marx and Engels in the discussion. A profound analysis of *obschina* could be found in the multiple writings by both Marx and Engels, and in Marx's extensive correspondence with Vera Zasulich (a representative of *narodniks*). I will summarise briefly their most essential conclusions.

As a primordial form of social organisation *obschina* appeared on the basis of natural relationships of kinship. As such, it was a universal institution that carried all social functions and determined all social relations: production, distribution, and legislation, as well as domestic. It was a necessary prerequisite for the productive activity of men. An isolated individual was helpless before nature, had no means to provide for himself, and had very little chance of survival on his own. To be part of a community was an indisputable condition of life itself. An individual could exist only as a part of a family, kin, clan or tribe. The primitiveness of labour and the means of production determined its collective character as well as the collective form of appropriation and distribution of produce. It was a first form of co-operation, which resulted in collective consciousness. A single individual had no separate existence. Such communal form of social organisation was typical for all primitive societies. While German *mark* and Scottish clan, were practically eradicated by developing feudalism, in Latin America, India and Russia this form continued to exist within the feudal social relationships.⁸ Marx distinguished three basic types of communes, according to the stages of disintegration of original communal unity into the unity of independent households: Asiatic, Ancient, and German (from the primordial unity, based on the kinship relations of blood, to the territorial, based on the relations between neighbours not related by blood, with a combination of both in between (Marx and Engels, Vol. 46: 461-508).

By the end of the 19th century, Russian *obschina* was definitely a variety of the third type. It was a community of peasants based on the territorial principle. It had a very strong institution of

self-government, in whose authority was the distribution of land, co-operation of agrarian works and use of equipment, organisation of mutual help in domestic matters, election of the village leaders, collection of money for communal needs and resolution of civil, domestic and petty criminal cases. After Agrarian Reform of 1861, *obschina* became the lowest link in state administration, a part of the monarchic establishment. But as Marx pointed out, at this stage *obschina* ceases to be a classless social organisation. The separation of governing and organising functions from those of production, their concentration in the hands of most influential and wealthy members of the community, led to the continuous stratification and social differentiation of the community into agrarian, bourgeois and proletariat. New capitalist relationships started the destruction of *obschina* from within and induced the development of a new person incompatible with the old socio-economic relationships. Collective consciousness was gradually undermined by the conflict of economic interests and growing individualism. Values and norms of communal life became means of oppression and manipulation used to keep community together, as its own stability had been eroded. Nothing could save *obschina* from self-destruction.

Marx, Engels and Lenin highly appreciated such features of *obschina* as traditions, forms and skills of collective labour and distribution, the democratic character of its self-government based on solidarity and co-operation, the traditional consciousness of communal land-ownership, collective consciousness with its traditional values of mutual help, reciprocity and empathy. But they were far from its idealisation. They questioned the originality and uniqueness of *obschina* as a communal way of life, and suggested that the time of messianic nations had passed forever. The main weakness of *obschina* they saw in its parochial insularity. Being a "localised microcosm", it more often than not resulted in "centralised despotism" (Marx), did not respond well to contacts with other peoples and cultures, and, therefore, promoted a mentality of narrow-mindedness, prejudice,⁹ superstition, inertia, ignorance and barbarism.

Lenin maintained that the socialist revolution would liberate *obschina* from all the negative characteristics, while the socialist *collective* would take over all the positive ones. Communism was considered as the only social organisation where the free development of each individual was a condition for the free development of all (Engels). It would be difficult to summarise even briefly the extensive research and publications produced by Soviet philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and educationalists on the problems of collectivity and the person. At this point, it would suffice to mention only that their major concern was to promote the ethical values of collectivism and to ensure that the socialist *collective* would generate a person with fully realised human potential. In reality it often led to conformism, indifference, lack of creativity, and depersonalisation. But the problems of the socialist *collective* are a matter of special analysis, while the main points of Marxist analysis of Russian *obschina* could find their application in the analysis of *Ubuntu* and its roots.

APPLICATIONS TO UBUNTU

Most of the *Ubuntists* emphasize the African way of life as an indisputable source of *Ubuntu*.¹⁰ In such cases they should agree that it is a product in particular historical, socio-economic and cultural conditions. At the same time, the values of *Ubuntu* are proclaimed to be universal in character and are used without regard to their historical and cultural context, which results in a certain degree of idealization. A. Shutte seems to be the only one aware of the problem: "If *Ubuntu* is to become real in our own contemporary South Africa it will show itself in ways

that are very different from the past. President Mandela may pay a *lobola* of cattle for his new bride, but this can no longer be an authentic expression of *Ubuntu* in family life in a new South Africa. One has to distinguish the heart of *Ubuntu* from its various outward manifestations. Many of the old customs would be a betrayal of the spirit of *Ubuntu* in our contemporary society" (Shutte: 6). How much does his philosophy of *Ubuntu* have in common with the original one? Is it going to be of universal value due to the African origination and heritage or despite them? Further, is *Ubuntu* a way of life and world view that survive without the socio-economic relationships on which it was based? Is its collective consciousness compatible with capitalism, private property, market economy, and division of labour with consequent conflict of interests, competition and individualism?

In order to avoid a romantic and idealised view of *Ubuntu* as an African way of life and African world view, it must be analysed in the context of the social organisation from which it has originated and its so-called universal values have to be related to the customs and traditions from which they have been born or reflect.

According to Winifred Hoernle (Shapera, 1966: 67), despite linguistic and cultural differences, the Bantu peoples shared more or less similar social organisations of the tribe or chiefdom. Apart from political reasons, the unity of the tribe was cemented by the communal ownership of the land and natural resources. The communal psychology of the Bantu was inherent in the communal use of land and the need for a joint effort in any undertaking. The social structure of Bantu society was constituted in the framework of relationships between the members of a community. This was manifested in an ordered group life, with reciprocal rights and duties, privileges and obligations, determining behaviour patterns for each individual member towards other members, and of moulding of feelings, thoughts, and conduct of members according to this pattern. Only in and through them can the individual achieve personal self-realisation and participate in the satisfactions offered by the life of his or her community.

In view of the Bantu social organisation the formula *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*¹¹ is simply a statement of social fact that what I am and who I am depends on my position in the complex network of social relationships. In this case it is apparently identical to Marx's definition of a person as an ensemble of all social relationships (Marx and Engels, Vol. 42: 265). At this point it has no apparent ethical meaning, says nothing about the quality of my personality and does not guarantee these. It could be applied equally to the Italian Mafia as a very particular form of collectivity with a strong sense of kinship and group consciousness based on norms of participation, co-operation, sharing, respect and loyalty, where vendetta could be seen as a form of reciprocity in kind and *omerta* as a form of group solidarity. But we can hardly consider a member of the Mafia to be an ethical ideal of a person. Apparently it is not enough to be a part of a group or collectivity to become a good person: integrated, complete and with fully realised human potential. Although cricket is a team sport that presupposes a high level of co-operation, participation, mutual support, and collective effort, the ethical influence does not operate automatically, as evidenced by the occurrence of bribing. Hippies valued communal life and sharing to the extent of sharing their sex partners and children, but all in all their world view would be rather incompatible with the *Ubuntu* understanding of collective consciousness.

I believe that the system of Bantu social and ethical values answered perfectly all the requirements of its social structure and organisation. It assured the formation of a person who could become a suitable member of the Bantu community, would "honour the chief and tribal custom, respect those older than himself, value those things which are of value to the society, and observe tribal taboos" (Krige, 1966: 106) It is not surprising that "the *ubuntu* practise

stipulates that the person is expected to surrender to the cultural norms set forth in society. This is a package deal." (Maseko, 2000: 15)

"The so-called 'communal system' of the Bantu was largely the manifestation of [the] close bond of solidarity and reciprocity arising out of kinship and affecting well-nigh every aspect of daily life" (Shaper and Goodwin, 1966: 166) It was a unity of kin; those not explicitly included were therefore implicitly excluded. It was patriarchal in nature, very hierarchical and highly discriminatory. Everything that anyone did was determined by his or her position within the complex network of relationships with its inflexible set of obligations and taboos. It was not completely homogeneous or harmonious. The class system flourished, even within what was in effect an extended family. Some were more equal than others.¹²

This was a kind of unity that thrives on the subsistence level and is founded on its particular socio-economic relationships. How many native South Africans gradually would disregard their kin provided all their requirements would be supplied by the neutral agencies? Would not the bonds of kinship become redundant as the self-contained capsulized individual became more and more established through modern technology, encouraged by capitalism?

The amount, diversity and complexity of the social rules, ethical norms, and taboos needed for establishing and maintaining Bantu social unity is almost shocking and suggests that the latter has not been easy and did not come naturally or spontaneously, but had to be heavily regulated and controlled. There is evidence that it was not always successful or peaceful where a conflict of interests was involved.¹³

Elaborate social structure, hierarchy, and the precise determination of conduct were designed in order to fuse a plurality of forces and interests into a close unit. They projected the totality of life style upon the individual and claimed him entirely. There was possibly a feeling of harmony and stability within such social structure, as it created the kind of organic self-sufficiency by virtue of which the same stream of life and consciousness flowed through all community members. The only condition was that every person knew his or her place and abided by the rules.

In such narrowly circumscribed society with considerable homogeneity and stability of standards, values, and roles, a person could feel quite comfortable, secure and even happy. This was possible because one identifies with one's position in the structure of socially sanctioned roles and therefore one's self-image corresponds to the image that others have of one. One's self-respect and respect had from others was a function of one's roles. Such a person would lack neither integration nor self-realisation, since the very self (including expectations, aspirations, and life-project) is given unambiguously by one's social location. But there was also a possibility of such social relations becoming like a spider's web: suffocating, oppressive, precluding the survival of any free, revolutionary, critical spirit.¹⁴ Discipline and authority, economic duties, legal affiliations, and control played a determining part in the conduct and attitudes of the individuals, creating an atmosphere of repression and intolerance, in which protest often entailed social ostracism and even violence.

Though the Bantu "communal system" based on kinship produced many positive features (which usually could be found in other communities all over the world), a number of features are particular (probably, unique) to Bantu society, like *hlonipa* (Sesotho, "respect"). I do not argue with their propriety in the old days, but it is clear that in the new social and economic conditions they become dangerous anachronisms. Critical assessment and re-evaluation of tradition is called for, whereby tradition is viewed not simply as the passive acceptance of values inherited from

the previous generations, but as the creative shaping of the heritage from the perspective of ethical ideals in view of what people of South Africa want to become in the future.

When promoting the values and norms of Ubuntuism it is necessary to define clearly in what sense such concepts as solidarity, reciprocity, respect, loyalty and so on are used. The authors writing on Ubuntu, while referring to the named values as traditional, view them from broader humanistic, but inevitably Eurocentric, perspective.

The confusion and misunderstanding seem to be unavoidable, considering that the majority of the people who continue the traditional way of living are native speakers. A contemporary Ubuntuist would say "to respect" means to treat with consideration, avoid interfering with, harming, degrading, and insulting, whereas a traditionalist would think *hlonepo* with all its implications. One would say loyalty refers to loyalty to ideals of truth, justice and reconciliation; the other would refer it to allegiance to a chief or group loyalty, and so on.

There is another danger in values being used in their initial sense, as is the general tendency because kinship and clan mentalities are very much alive in Africa, namely, that in application to the changed social, economic and cultural context they are open to distortion and abuse. Recent and contemporary African history is full of examples of how clan solidarity produces xenophobia and feeds racial prejudice; from being an ethical value respect, turns into blind submission to authority and corruption of power and by power; uncritical loyalty to a leader results in a totalitarian regime; and the demand of kinship reciprocity breeds nepotism. As values are context-relevant, in order not only to survive but also to be able to promote its most important characteristics tradition has to keep pace with time. The Bantu "communal system" and the corresponding philosophy of *Ubuntu* carry a great potential for development, but also the seeds of self-destruction. The uncritical idealisation of *Obschina* to be found in Tolstoy and others might be taken as a lesson for the future debate on *Ubuntu* as an ethical ideal.

CONCLUSION

Both Russian and African thinkers start with the criticism of Western individualism as in the 19th century individualism was not only the prevailing philosophy, but also the way of life for the majority of uprooted, industrialised and atomised Western Europeans. At that time Western philosophy reflected the progressive ideas and values of rising capitalism in opposition to outmoded and outlived values of feudal ideology, with the emphasis being on individual rights and individual liberty. Since then, Western philosophy has undergone a considerable shift in attitude. Critical alternatives to radical individualism have been offered for more than a century: by various Marxists, Hegelians and some existentialists; by behaviourists (Skinner); by social psychologists (Dewey, Mead, Royce); by anthropologists (Bateson); by Charles Taylor in his account of the self; by Joseph Raz in his recent defence of liberalism; by Jacques Lacan in his accounts of how the Subject remakes itself in encounters with the Other (Wayne, 1988: 238).

Against these critical alternatives the notion of the self as an essentially private individual has proven astonishingly persistent. It is not hard to understand why resistance to the social mentality has persisted. For one thing, there were good reasons for the rise of individualism against various excessive forms of conformism. Secondly, capitalism as a prevailing form of social organisation is not very conducive to the formation of a collectivist mentality. And last but not the least, as some philosophers pointed out, it is a paradox of the human condition to be torn by two opposite drives: a striving to be an individual, free and unique, and a desire to belong, to share, to be supported, and to transcend the limitations of a finite individuality (Koestler, 1978).

The problem left to be resolved is how to create a perfect community that would promote the development and self-realisation of the free and integral individual. Holding the values of communitarianism close to my heart, I have hope that the people of Africa will find the way.

NOTES

1. The basic views of *Ubuntu* have been comprehensively outlined in Prinsloo, 1995.
2. Despite the etymology of the word *Slavophilism* ("love of Slavs"), the actual meaning it conveyed was not of solidarity and brotherhood among all the Slavs. Its main purpose was to promote and cultivate the traditional native features in the social and cultural life of ancient Russia.
3. *Mir* could be literary translated as "peace" and "world", but in that context meant a gathering of the adult members of the community for the purpose of decision making. In its nature, purposes and organisation it was very similar to *pitso* in Basotho society.
4. Compare with the following statement: "At the centre of *Ubuntu* is the idea that *Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, persons depend on persons to be persons. This is our hidden secret. This is something we can now reveal to the world. This is something the world needs. It can become our special product." (Shutte; 2); "Africans have this thing called *Ubuntu*: . . . the essence of being human, it is a part of the gift that Africa will give the world." (Desmond Tutu, in Mulemfo, 2000: 57). "Africa has a big role to play in helping [Western] societies rediscover the meaning and essence of human life." (Mulemfo, 2000: 56)
5. Compare with Ruel Khoza's idea of encompassing values such as universal brotherhood for Africans as an expression of African collective consciousness.
6. Compare this with the following: "It is by belonging to the community that we become ourselves. The community is not opposed to the individual, nor does it simply swallow the individual up; it enables each individual to become a unique centre of shared life." (Shutte: 3).
7. Compare with the following: "God's existence in *Isintu* is highly esteemed and acknowledged. God is intuitively known, i.e. is a knowledge, not so much concerned with details, as in science of reality but one that through the vision of totality that starts from intuitive axiom that an overall order must exist and it provides the protective shell within which the person's existence may blossom. Hence, God is left shrouded in mystery yet loved and honoured as such" (Maseko, 2001: 17).
8. It could be of interest to know that attempts to idealise and revive the traditions of such communities are not that uncommon. For example, James Ogilvy (1977) maintains that the only opposition to both extreme individualism and extreme collectivism could be what he calls "a philosophy and democracy of some". The best example of the latter, according to him, is a traditional Scottish clan. I took the pains of reading the history of Scotland and found out not only that the Scottish clan had a lot in common with the organisation of Russian *obshina* and the African tribe but also that it was torn apart by internal conflicts, and feuds, arising from its very nature. It started when the chiefs drifted from the patriarchal ideal to a belief in their absolute power over people. Since then the history of the Scottish clan is a history of continuous fighting, cruelty, atrocity upon atrocity, piracy, disorder, betrayal, corruption, assassination, massacre, cattle-rustling, wife-exposing, and bloodshed (John Macleod, 1997).
9. As an example of racial prejudice I could name the *pogroms* (discrimination and extermination of Jews), the movement that was initiated within Russian *obschina* and was a result of exclusivity of the so-called Slavic solidarity. Another example of extreme chauvinism

was presented by the Slavophile doctrine providing a whole range of arguments for the justification of the most harsh and cruel repression of the Polish uprising in 1863.

10. For example, "This vision is rooted in the history of Africa and is at the centre of the culture of most South Africans". (Shutte: 1); "Let us also note that there is no school where *Ubuntu* could be studied. It cannot be read in a book but it is rather a lived attentive experience." (Maseko : 16).

11. Compare the different expressions of this central idea. Shutte: 'Persons depend on persons to be persons.' Maseko: 'We are people through other people.' Makhudu: 'I am, because you are.' Desmond Tutu: 'A person is a person through another person, my humanity is caught up, bound up and inextricable yours.'

12. Marc Epprecht presents an extensive and very convincing analysis of the traditional Bosocho society in the 19th century: development of capitalism from within (from what in fact has been patriarchal feudalism), class formation and the emergence of racial capitalist patriarchy, use of traditional patriarchy by the colonial establishment. According to him, "Sesotho defined clear hierarchies of gender, class and age, many of which were objectively oppressive and exploitative" (2000" 29).

13. A. W. Hoernle, for example, describing the life of an average *umzi* (household) of Southern Nguni tribes, says that though co-wives of a polygamist may have a strong fellow-feeling for one another and usually co-operate, beneath this co-operation there is a conflict, because each mother aims to further the interests of her own children first and foremost. There is, therefore, an underlying tension and strain between the families of an *umzi*, which often reveals itself in mutual accusations of sorcery and witchcraft. (1966: 77)

14. "There are societies, in which firmly integrated personalities realise their 'selves', inasmuch as they fulfil the expectations they have of themselves according to the *nomos* they acknowledge – but a *nomos* which can be called their own only if one sees them, as one might see the members of a beehive, as manifestations of an organic social personality whose collective requirements are so homogeneous and so unshakably introjected that the individual would not know how to set about making the *nomos* his own by working through it critically and creatively. Traditional tribal societies are usually taken to exemplify such cultures" (Benn, 1988: 205).

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CHAPTER VII

WHY WE NEED A NEW ETHIC FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

RICHARD SIVIL

We are enveloped and immersed in a world comprised of air, earth, waters, plants, animals and constructed artefacts. It is both animate and inanimate. The environment, then, may be loosely defined as that which constitutes and makes up our surroundings. As we occur in the world together with our surroundings, acting upon it and being acted upon, we form part of the environment. Located within this environment, humankind has grown and developed socially and economically to a point that if present trends continue the earth's natural systems will be impoverished within less than a century (Pierce & Van De Veer 1995: 37). This situation can be referred to as an environmental crisis. To talk of an environmental crisis signifies that we are at a turning point, a period requiring insightful thinking, creative solutions, and a transformation not only of actions, but also of spiritual, perceptual, and moral outlook. South Africa, in a bid to participate in the global arena, needs to respond to these challenges.

Science and environmental policy are the most commonly accepted options for dealing with this crisis. While each has a significant contribution to make, overemphasis on either option could easily compound the environmental crisis. The environmental crisis is primarily a consequence of human action. Value systems inform actions. Therefore, we need to question our most fundamental values. This highlights the importance of ethical thinking in relation to the environmental crisis. The three main classes of ethical theory are teleological, utilitarian and deontological. It will be shown that they are, for the most part, applied in anthropocentric ways. I will argue that an anthropocentric value system is inadequate for the development of an environmental ethic.

THE RESPONSES OF SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Understanding the magnitude of the environmental crisis and the potential threat it poses to life on this planet, it is clearly not an option to adopt a "wait and see" attitude. A popular option is to turn to *science*, which helps provide adequate material needs for everyone and also extends the richness of our non-material lives. Playing such a socially prominent and important role, science constitutes a major element of the "cultural filter" through which Western society views the environment (Pepper 1996: 240). Classical science, which is still very dominant, has developed into a dualist paradigm in which the scientific observer is separate and distinct from his or her observations. This has contributed to a conception of the world consisting of independent material objects, each having independent properties, with the behaviour of the whole explainable by the behaviour of its constituent parts. Nature is viewed as separate from humanity, machine-like and reducible to basic components, which can be known objectively and predicted. This science represents the source of absolute truths on which to base decisions and is often regarded as the most respectable way to know nature.

The dimensions of environmental issues are seldom, if ever, restricted to the specific parameters of any one scientific discipline (Des Jardins 1997:5). Moreover, most major issues facing humanity stretch beyond being mere scientific problems, involving as they do, society, politics, law, economics, etc. Covering such a broad spectrum, it is evident that science, widely

distinguished by the compartmentalisation of knowledge, cannot deliver comprehensive solutions to global issues (McMichael 1993: 326). The task of assessing the impacts of ecological imbalances and disruptions on human and other life forms entails significantly more than the classical scientific paradigm of hypothesis formation, data collection and data analysis. Leaving environmental problems in the hands of science would, therefore, effectively result in a narrow understanding of the problem at hand, and by correlation a limited and short-sighted solution. Furthermore, classical science asserts that "scientific knowledge equals power over nature" (Pepper 1996: 240), and that the manipulation of nature can be used for social progress. This has resulted in science being used in many modern developments, of which some exert a negative impact on the environment (e.g. inorganic fertilisers, pesticides, industrial processes, nuclear energy, and nuclear threat, to name but a few). In this light, science should not be viewed as the ultimate source of hope for the future, and clearly should not be given full responsibility for addressing the environmental crisis.

Fortunately paradigm shifts are occurring within the field. Classical understandings of the world consisting of "independent particles" are being reassessed and replaced by a more holistic and ecologically informed understanding that all things are inseparable from the greater whole that is the universe (Pepper 1996:247). In this sense current science can be useful in developing a more encompassing understanding of the environment. We should, however, be wary of placing scientists in an authoritative position in the decision making process.

Another commonly accepted option for dealing with the crisis at hand is that of environmental policy, legislation, and regulation, which can curb the effects of environmental pollution and improve the quality of the environment (Merchant 1992:26). Headway is being made with policies addressing environmental issues at both local and global levels.¹ The close association that exists between population growth and the other environmental issues makes it apparent that one of the most important policies would be to curb population growth.² This would entail a stabilisation of human numbers with a gradual levelling out at a lower figure at some point in the future (Marshall 1974: 137). Unfortunately individual governments largely have been reluctant to formulate such policies. Due to the delicate nature of the topic, it would be politically suicidal to include such policy recommendations in a party manifesto. Policies on resource conservation and pollution are equally as important as population policies. Unfortunately government cannot be isolated from the economy of the country. It therefore becomes very difficult to achieve concerted action towards resource management and protection when most political programs seem dedicated to increasing the prosperity of the individual voter and of the Gross National Product (Marshall 1974:152). Furthermore, the effective implementation of such acts and policies often lies in the hands of local authorities and councils who have the immediate needs of the community on their agenda. Generally community "growth and development" holds greater importance than environmental concerns.

Science and environmental policy options each have distinctive roles to play in addressing the environmental crisis. Science is a useful tool for developing technology and increasing our understanding of the complexity of life, while governmental policies regulate human social behaviour. We must, however, remember that each also has its respective problems. It would be unwise to assume that on their own they could effectively solve the current environmental crisis. Furthermore, handing over the task to science or government entails a relinquishing of personal responsibility that will not make the environmental crisis go away. The point is that we all act in ways that contribute to the crisis, and we are thus all responsible for what happens to the world around us. Accepting responsibility entails not only an acknowledgement that our individual

actions contribute to the environmental crisis, but also that we are accountable for our actions. We should be willing to amend or change our actions in an attempt to remedy the current situation. Our actions, both individually and collectively, depend largely upon what we believe to be good, what is right, and what is permissible (Pierce & Van De Veer 1995: 1). Therefore we need to ask fundamental questions about what we as human beings value, why we value the things we do, the way we should live our lives, our place in nature, and the kind of world we want to leave behind for others (Des Jardins 1997:5). This places our value system at the heart of the environmental crisis. Clearly then, placing the burden of responsibility on either science or government policy will do little to correct the situation as long as the values informing our actions remain unchanged. We will alter our attitudes and actions through questioning and changing our values, and in such a way we can begin to address the problems of the environment. In no way should this suggest that ethical theories can solve the environmental crisis on their own, for "ethical and philosophical analysis done in the abstract, ignorant of science, technology, and other relevant disciplines, will not have much to contribute to the resolution of environmental problems" (Des Jardins 1997: 9). Science, legislation, and ethics need to combine forces in order to address the crisis at hand.

THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC ASSUMPTION IN ETHICAL THEORIES

Questioning our values is an invitation to *ethics*, the branch of philosophy that seeks a reasoned examination of what custom tells us about how we ought to live (Des Jardins 1997: 16). An ethic assumes that there are moral norms and values that govern human behaviour. It becomes the task of an ethical theory critically to examine and explain what these moral norms are, to whom they apply and what the entailing responsibilities are, as well as to provide a justification for those responsibilities (Des Jardins 1997: 9). Ethical theories are thus an attempt to formulate a systematic and comprehensive account of living with reasoned and justified values, providing a basis from which to guide behaviour (Des Jardins 1997:15).

Ethical theories have generally been regarded as falling into three main classes: teleological, utilitarian, and deontological. Traced back to Aristotle (383 – 333 BC), the teleological approach recognises that all things have a *telos*, a specific function or purpose to which they are inclined. Understanding the *telos* allows us to understand the object or being itself. ‘Goodness’ is achieved when an object or thing is able to fulfil its purpose, or actualise its potential (Des Jardins 1997: 22). Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) further developed Aristotle’s theory by synthesising teleology and Christian theology. Utilitarianism is founded upon the writings of Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873). It provides an account of the ethical good as that which produces the greatest good for the greatest number (Des Jardins 1997: 24). According to this account an act is ethically acceptable if its consequences are good for the greatest number of individuals, and bad if they are not.³ Deontological ethics, founded mainly on the ethical writings of Immanuel Kant (1742 – 1804), rests upon the claim that we can be held responsible only for things we can control. While the consequences of our actions are largely beyond our control, the actions themselves are not. Assuming that we are rational beings, we act freely on the basis of our rationality and the principles that we derive from it. Deontological ethics focuses on these principles and maxims. Kant argued that we act ethically whenever these principles are rationally informed and accepted by all other rational beings.

Ethical theories offer moral criteria in order to determine how far one should extend moral standing. If a being is recognised to have moral standing, its interests must be taken into account

when deciding what actions are permissible (Pierce & Van De Veer 1995: 7). The well-being and interests of what lacks moral standing do not count in any morally relevant way. A value theory is anthropocentric when it recognises the moral standing of human beings alone. The term 'anthropocentrism' is ambiguous. It is commonly defined by making reference to the location of values. It is largely accepted that humans are the centre of all value. Accordingly, anthropocentrists would argue that since all value originates from humans, non-human entities and objects have value only in relation to humans. A further understanding of anthropocentrism defines value as the satisfaction of human preference. From this, two forms of anthropocentrism have developed. Strong anthropocentrism which explains value by making reference to the satisfaction of subjective preferences, and weak anthropocentrism, which explains value by making reference to objective preferences. Strong anthropocentrism prioritises the satisfaction of immediate human needs and desires, no matter how trivial. Weak anthropocentrism, on the other hand, acknowledges that not all human needs and desires are rational and thus recognises the need to deliberate regarding established value-systems (Pierce & VanDeVeer 1995: 184). Humans are commonly viewed to be "valuable in and of themselves . . . (while) the non-human world is valuable only insofar as it is of value to humans" (Fox 1990: 149). Humans are seen to possess intrinsic value, while all non-humans are seen to hold only instrumental value. Since "the base class of traditional Western ethics is coextensive with the class of human beings" (Callicott 1998: 9), only humans are recognised to have direct moral standing. Anthropocentric ethical approaches do not accord moral standing to non-human beings as they are seen to be morally inferior. Lacking the required qualifications for ethical consideration, non-humans are treated as things or means to human ends, rather than as ends in themselves (Elliot 1995: 35).

The three classes of ethical theories (teleological, consequential and deontological) have, for the most part, been interpreted and applied in anthropocentric ways.⁴ While Aristotle believed that all living entities have a *telos*, or natural purpose to which they are inclined, he analysed this further into three fundamental activities or powers of life: nutrition, sensation, and thinking. All living entities were seen to possess the first power, all animals the first two, but only human beings possess all three. These three powers were arranged hierarchically, with the power to think at the apex, thereby establishing rationality as a moral criterion. Aristotle's teleology specifically favoured human beings and resulted in him seeing that all "animals exist for the sake of man, . . . for the use he can make of them as well as for the food that they provide" (Aristotle 1962: 40). Aquinas' development of Aristotle's teleology did little to change the human-centred moral criterion. Animals were seen to have "no independent moral standing" (Pierce & Van De Veer 1995: 15), it being accepted as divine providence that human beings have the natural world at their disposal.⁵

The hedonistic theory of utility is based upon pleasure itself. This expands "the realm of moral consideration to include all things that have the capacity to feel pleasure and pain" (Des Jardins 1997: 93). Accordingly sentience becomes the moral criterion. However, this does not necessitate that the moral standing of all sentient creatures is acknowledged, since it is compatible with the principle of utility to recognise differences in the quality of pleasure. This allows for certain kinds of pleasure being more desirable and more valuable than others, with pleasures of the intellect, feeling, imagination and moral sentiments being placed over pleasures of physical sensation (Cooper 1998: 198). This amounts to a view which accepts that while many animals are clearly capable of feeling pain, humans need not concern themselves with animals' pain, for the affairs of humanity are higher than the affairs of animals.⁶ Although their central

criterion in principle extends beyond human capacities, in practice traditional utilitarian ethical theories have largely favoured humanity.

While Kant did not deny that animals suffer, he did deny that animals are persons. Persons in this sense are understood as rational, autonomous beings, capable of formulating and pursuing their own conceptions of the good. His rule-based deontology assumed that only human beings have the ability to think rationally and, therefore, have moral standing. Having interests in ourselves as rational beings amounted to the view that only the interests and well-being of humans count morally. Accordingly, it was accepted that non-persons could be used to suit the purposes of human beings, yet it was wrong to use a person only as a means to fulfil another person's end, because they should always (also) be recognised as being ends in themselves. Thus human beings were viewed as superior to the rest of the non-human natural world.

Apart from being manifest in the formulation of traditional ethical theories, anthropocentric assumptions hold a predominant place in the modern Western value system. Historically, these assumptions can be traced through Western religious, scientific and philosophical traditions. Western European civilisation, although in many respects a post-Christian civilisation, is deeply influenced and impregnated by Christian values (Attfeld & Dell 1998:141). Pre-scientific Christian views assumed human superiority, placing human existence at the centre of the universe, with 'man' created in God's image (Genesis 1: 26), a free being responsible for his own actions. An anthropocentric view of the world was interpreted from the scriptures, as the Word of God instructed that we "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1: 28). This was taken as a legitimising claim for human domination over nature. In contrast, Genesis 2: 15 puts 'man' into the Garden of Eden "to work it and take care of it". This was interpreted to place humankind in a position of stewardship, watching over the earth for the sake of God. Accordingly, it was understood to be humanity's role to look after the Lord's creation, and not to misuse it or destroy it.

The advent of science largely undermined and altered this particular view. In line with the thrust of scientific development of his time, Francis Bacon (1571 – 1626), advocated scientific methodology to manipulate nature for human benefit (Merchant 1992: 46). The experimental method of the sixteenth century was reinforced by the mechanical philosophy of Rene Descartes, who saw that through method we could "render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature" (Haldane & Ross 1955: 119). The natural world was seen as a clockwork machine, to be controlled, repaired and manipulated in the service of humanity. The science of Isaac Newton (1642 – 1727), resting on the assumption that matter consists of individual parts, with the whole being merely the sum of those parts, propagated a reductionistic view of the world where individual entities were seen to be independent of their context. These have culminated in a mechanistic view of a world, still dominant in the sciences today, in which nature, inert and dead, is seen to exist entirely for the fulfilment of human needs (Merchant 1992: 41,57). Anthropocentrism, interwoven into our intellectual development, extends beyond the realm of science to be the "single deepest and most persistent assumption of all the dominant Western philosophical, social, and political traditions since the time of the classical Greeks" (Fox 1990: 9).

A CRITIQUE OF ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN ETHICS

Three most significant and pressing factors contributing to the environmental crisis are the ever increasing human population, the energy crisis, and the abuse and pollution of the earth's

natural systems. These and other factors contributing to the environmental crisis can be directly linked to anthropocentric views of the world. The perception that value is located in, and emanates from, humanity has resulted in understanding human life as an ultimate value, superior to all other beings. This has driven innovators in medicine and technology to ever improve our medical and material conditions, in an attempt to preserve human life, resulting in more people being born and living longer. In achieving this aim, they have indirectly contributed to increasing the human population. Perceptions of superiority, coupled with developing technologies have resulted in a social outlook that generally does not rest content with the basic necessities of life. Demands for more medical and social aid, more entertainment and more comfort translate into demands for improved standards of living. Increasing population numbers, together with the material demands of modern society, place ever increasing demands on energy supplies. While wanting a better life is not a bad thing, given the population explosion the current energy crisis is inevitable, which brings a whole host of environmental implications in tow. This is not to say that every improvement in the standard of living is necessarily wasteful of energy or polluting to the planet, but rather it is the cumulative effect of these improvements that is damaging to the environment. The abuses facing the natural environment as a result of the energy crisis and the food demand are clearly manifestations of anthropocentric views that treat the environment as a resource and instrument for human ends. The pollution and destruction of the non-human natural world is deemed acceptable, provided that it does not interfere with other human beings.

It could be argued that there is nothing essentially wrong with anthropocentric assumptions, since it is natural, even instinctual, to favour one's self and species over and above all other forms of life. However, it is problematic in that such perceptions influence our actions and dealings with the world to the extent that the well-being of life on this planet is threatened, making the continuance of a huge proportion of existing life forms "tenuous if not improbable" (Elliot 1995: 1). Denying the non-human world ethical consideration, it is evident that anthropocentric assumptions provide a rationale for the exploitation of the natural world and, therefore, have been largely responsible for the present environmental crisis (Des Jardins 1997: 93).

Fox identifies three broad approaches to the environment informed by anthropocentric assumptions, which in reality are not distinct and separate, but occur in a variety of combinations. The "expansionist" approach is characterised by the recognition that nature has a purely instrumental value to humans. This value is accessed through the physical transformation of the non-human natural world, by farming, mining, damming etc. Such practices create an economic value, which tends to "equate the physical transformation of 'resources' with economic growth" (Fox 1990: 152). Legitimising continuous expansion and exploitation, this approach relies on the idea that there is an unending supply of resources. The "conservationist" approach, like the first, recognises the economic value of natural resources through their physical transformation, while at the same time accepting the fact that there are limits to these resources. It therefore emphasises the importance of conserving natural resources, while prioritising the importance of developing the non-human natural world in the quest for financial gain. The "preservationist" approach differs from the first two in that it recognises the enjoyment and aesthetic enrichment human beings receive from an undisturbed natural world. Focusing on the psychical nourishment value of the non-human natural world for humans, this approach stresses the importance of preserving resources in their natural states.

All three approaches are informed by anthropocentric assumptions. This results in a one-sided understanding of the human-nature relationship. Nature is understood to have a singular

role of serving humanity, while humanity is understood to have no obligations toward nature. Such a perception represents "not only a deluded but also a very dangerous orientation to the world" (Fox 1990: 13), as only the lives of human beings are recognised to have direct moral worth, while the moral consideration of non-human entities is entirely contingent upon the interests of human beings (Pierce & Van De Veer 1995: 9). Humanity is favoured as inherently valuable, while the non-human natural world counts only in terms of its use value to human beings. The "expansionist" and "conservationist" approaches recognise an economic value, while the "preservationist" approach recognises a hedonistic, aesthetic or spiritual value. They accept, without challenge, the assumption that the value of the non-human natural world is entirely dependent on human needs and interests. None attempt to move beyond the assumption that nature has any worth other than the value humans can derive from it, let alone search for a deeper value in nature. This ensures that human duties retain a purely human focus, thereby avoiding the possibility that humans may have duties that extend to non-humans. This can lead to viewing the non-human world, devoid of direct moral consideration, as a mere resource with a purely instrumental value of servitude. This gives rise to a principle of 'total use', whereby every natural area is seen for its potential cultivation value, to be used for human ends (Zimmerman 1998: 19). This provides limited means to criticise the behaviour of those who use nature purely as a warehouse of resources (Pierce & Van De Veer 1995: 184).

It is clear that humanity has the capacity to transform and degrade the environment. Given the consequences inherent in having such capacities, "the need for a coherent, comprehensive, rationally persuasive environmental ethic is imperative" (Pierce & Van De Veer 1995: 2). The purpose of an environmental ethic would be to account for the moral relations that exist between humans and the environment, and to provide a rational basis from which to decide how we ought and ought not to treat the environment. The environment was defined as the world in which we are enveloped and immersed, constituted by both animate and inanimate objects. This includes both individual living creatures, such as plants and animals, as well as non-living, non-individual entities, such as rivers and oceans, forests and velds, essentially, the whole planet Earth. This constitutes a vast and all-inclusive sphere, and, for purposes of clarity, shall be referred to as the "greater environment". In order to account for the moral relations that exist between humans and the greater environment, an environmental ethic should have a significantly wide range of focus.

I argue that anthropocentric value systems are not suitable to the task of developing a comprehensive environmental ethic. Firstly, anthropocentric assumptions have been shown to be largely responsible for the current environmental crisis. While this in itself does not provide strong support for the claim, it does cast a dim light on any theory that is informed by such assumptions. Secondly, an environmental ethic requires a significantly wide range of focus. As such, it should consider the interests of a wide range of beings. It has been shown that anthropocentric approaches do not entertain the notion that non-human entities can have interests independent of human interests. "Expansionist", "conservationist" and "preservationist" approaches only acknowledge a value in nature that is determined by the needs and interests of humans.

Thirdly, because anthropocentric approaches provide a moral account for the interests of humans alone, while excluding non-humans from direct moral consideration, they are not sufficiently encompassing. An environmental ethic needs to be suitably encompassing to ensure that a moral account is provided for all entities that constitute the environment. It could be argued that the indirect moral concern for the environment arising out of an anthropocentric approach is sufficient to ensure the protection of the greater environment. In response, only those

entities that are in the interest of humans will be morally considered, albeit indirectly, while those entities which fall outside of this realm will be seen to be morally irrelevant. Assuming that there are more entities on this planet that are not in the interest of humans than entities that are, it is safe to say that anthropocentric approaches are not adequately encompassing. Fourthly, the goals of an environmental ethic should protect and maintain the greater environment. It is clear that the expansionist approach, which is primarily concerned with the transformation of nature for economic return, does not meet these goals. Similarly, neither does the conservationist approach, which is arguably the same as the expansionist approach. The preservationist approach does, in principle satisfy this requirement. However, this is problematic for such preservation is based upon the needs and interests of humans, and "as human interests and needs change, so too would human uses for the environment" (Des Jardins 1997: 129). Non-human entities, held captive by the needs and interests of humans, are open to whatever fancies the interests of humans. In light of the above, it is my contention that anthropocentric value systems fail to provide a stable ground for the development of an environmental ethic.

It is fair to say that the success of the environmental movement is largely "a result of the power of anthropocentric arguments, for the general population began to realise that the degradation of the natural environment would have serious consequences for human health, safety, and survival" (Katz 1999: 378). This is of little relevance when regarding the development of an environmental ethic, for the awareness raised by anthropocentric arguments is restricted to the consequences affecting humans alone. Above I argued that anthropocentric value systems are unsuitable to the development of an environmental ethic. Traditional ethical theories (teleological, utilitarian, and deontological) were shown to be anthropocentric. This makes such theories unsuitable to the development of an environmental ethic. Clearly a wider and more encompassing ethic is required, one which extends moral concern beyond human boundaries. What is required is a "change in the ethics, in attitudes, values and evaluations" (Zimmerman 1998: 17), with the assumptions of an environmental ethic being "broader and more inclusive than the mere consideration of human interests" (Katz 1999: 378). Whether and how such an ethic is possible is the task of another paper.

NOTES

1. Section 24 of the South African Bill of Rights protects the environment for the benefit of present and future citizens. In addition, there is the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998, the Land Reform Programme of 1998 and the White Paper on Bio-diversity Conservation. Internationally there are Clean Air Acts, Water Resource Acts, Noise Abatement Acts, etc.

2. The exponential growth of the human population results in an equivalent increase in the amount of energy required and the rate of resource usage, which in turn increases environmental degradation and contamination, through over-use and pollution.

3. There are essentially two types of utilitarianism: hedonistic utilitarianism and preference utilitarianism. Bentham and Mill represent the former, recognising that pleasure or the absence of pain is something we all desire, excluding deviants who prefer pain or avoid pleasure. This universal acceptance makes pleasure, for the hedonistic utilitarian, something that is objectively good (Des Jardins 1997: 25). Preference utilitarianism, on the other hand, identifies the good as something that we achieve through the satisfaction of our desires.

4. There are exceptions to this generalisation: The Pythagorean tradition, Empedocles of Acragas, St. Francis of Assisi, and Jeremy Bentham all in some way recognised the place of animals in moral considerations.

5. The teleology of Aristotle and Aquinas was not intended to support an ethos of abuse, since both emphasised the importance of virtues of good character. To act in a cruel or destructive manner was not encouraged since bad actions reflected that the agent had a bad character.

6. Hedonistic utilitarianism aims to maximize the total quantity of pleasure. Accordingly, pleasure or the absence of pain is of primary importance. Because of this, sentient beings are treated as mere vessels or receptacles of pleasure. Since it is of utmost importance that the maximum quantity of pleasure does not drop below a certain point, the killing of sentient beings is acceptable provided they are replaced with other similar beings. To avoid reducing human beings to replaceable receptacles, the good has been suggested to be premised upon the satisfaction of desires (preference utilitarianism). This ensures that those who can experience desires and satisfaction should count morally. While some of the attributes necessary for such an experience may be granted to animals, it is widely accepted that they are by and large human attributes.

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CHAPTER VIII
MAKING SENSE OF BEING IN DISGRACE
PATRICK GIDDY

What is it to be in disgrace? I am going to take J. M. Coetzee's Tanner Lectures, *The Lives of Animals* (Coetzee, 1999a, henceforth *Lives*) as a protest against the rationalist tradition by which we judge actions right or wrong, and persons good or bad in accordance with rules which both give order to society and frame our conception of the world in general. The rules, appealing to our "rational" side, set us apart from animals, which are seemingly beyond the horizon of our active moral sympathy. Less obviously but equally important, there is tied into this the concomitant attitude of dominance and control in general over nature, over others. It is this that throws a blanket of suspicion over the whole approach of the rationalist moral tradition.

Many have taken Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* (published in the same year as *The Lives of Animals*) as simply an overly pessimistic account of post-Apartheid South Africa. But I will try to show that each book can illumine the other, and together throw light on our question. *Disgrace*, I will argue, only makes sense against the background of a sense of the value of all life, human and animal, as living lives on their own terms. In abstracting from this dimension, I argue, the rationalist tradition would be correctly censured.

In the first part of this paper I introduce Coetzee's argument (or rather the argument of his protagonist Costello, in the dramatic dialogue form of the book) that it is the animal living a life of value on its own terms that is a proper object of our moral respect. At the same time I deal with the first of the two objections to this idea, namely the question of the very possibility of intelligent empathy with non-human animals. In the second part I deal with Coetzee's critique of the rationalist tradition in general. Finally, I ask in what exactly consists the ethical significance of empathy with animals, bringing in the underlying moral journey undertaken by the central character in the novel *Disgrace*. I argue that only if such empathy is, indeed, warranted and called forth by the kind of connectedness we have to all living creatures, could rules of moral behaviour be objectively binding on the free conscience. For only then could the latter express the modalities of our participation in an order of which we are a part and in which we find our deepest selves. Inadequate development of this capacity for empathy (a mark of our own society) would constitute an undesirable state of being cut off from the springs of truly human and communal life, and would, therefore, be an issue of central importance in ethics.

UNDERSTANDING THE LIVES OF ANIMALS

Elizabeth Costello, Coetzee's protagonist, speaks of :

the places of death all around us, the places of slaughter to which, in a huge communal effort, we close our hearts. Each day a fresh holocaust, yet, as far as I can see, our moral being is untouched. We do not feel tainted. We can do anything, it seems, and come away clean. (*Lives*, 35)

The allusion, of course, is to the Jewish holocaust. The latter is of a piece with our inability or unwillingness to empathize with the animals killed in the mechanized production of meat for our consumption. Is she envisaging a Nuremberg-type trial for large-scale farmers the world

over? The question is rhetorical. The point, I would argue, is to suggest in the strongest way possible, through hyperbole, that the two "holocausts" (animal and Jewish) are connected through our inability to appreciate a life lived on its own terms, whether our own, that of another person, or indeed of another species.¹

Coetzee appeals to the natural life of the animal. He imagines the situation of the psychologist Wolfgang Koehler's captured Tenerife ape, Sultan. Koehler was studying ape mentality. Can the ape make the connections between the stick thrown into the cage and the inadequate length of his arm to reach the bananas just outside the bars. Coetzee points out that the situation of being caged, without food, is however much more likely to give rise to the thoughts, Why is he starving me? Where has he gone, since I can still smell him? This, however, is the "wrong" thought; the "right" one is, How do I use the stick to get the bananas?

In his deepest being Sultan is not interested in the banana problem. Only the experimenter's single-minded regimentation forces him to concentrate on it. The question that truly occupies him, as it occupies the rat and the cat and every other animal trapped in the hell of the laboratory or the zoo, is: Where is home, and how do I get there?
(*Lives*, 30)

The life as revealed here as deeply part of the creature is of value in itself, and it is a conscious or 'felt' life.

The ethical implications of this are worth noting. In the Cartesian framework there can be no truck with the idea that that one can approach value through understanding and affirming the natural life of the animal (without this implying reductionism). There, consciousness (and hence value, the determinations of the free conscience) is cut off from and opposed to 'nature'. Thus humans (defined by thinking, cogitation) are cut off from non-human animals. This brings us to the first objection to Coetzee's approach, namely the Cartesian strictures on any attempt to describe the *conscious life* of the animal.

Coetzee/Costello mentions the behaviourist taboo on considering the subjective mental states of animals, and refers to Thomas Nagel's celebrated article, "What it's Like to Be a Bat?" (Nagel, 1979) For Nagel, we cannot get any closer to knowing what it is like, because we cannot imagine ourselves into a bat-like existence. We do not have the sense equipment to do so. Coetzee disagrees. We can and do imagine ourselves into any number of situations in which our sense-experience is not fully shared. Coetzee/Costello appeals to the reception of his novels. We praise his fiction partly because we judge it to have captured the reality of a certain person – say, a woman. Coetzee's argument here appeals to a performative self-contradiction in those who evidently see themselves as appreciating fiction judged "good", namely those who invited Coetzee/Costello to give the lectures on values. It would not, however, seem to apply to those who have no such pretensions. We need, therefore, to give an argument in more general terms.

Nagel adverts to the Cartesian appeal to the experience of subjectivity, and in particular to the sheer reality of *having* conscious experience. His argument is that our conscious experience, our experience of 'what it's like' (i.e. *to me*) has an ineluctably subjective character, which cannot be captured by physical descriptions of the phenomenon. You can give a scientific, objective, account of the bat's visual mechanism, but this will not capture what it's like to live in a bat-like way. "It is unlikely that we will get closer to the real nature of the experience by leaving behind the particularity of its point of view and striving for a description in terms accessible to beings that could only imagine what it was like to be that organism." (Nagel,

1979a:174) "Facts about what it is like *for* the experiencing organism," says Nagel, "are accessible only from one point of view".(1979a:172) Now while it is true that we do experience a reality circumscribed by the sense-capacities unique to our species, still, I will now argue, this is just one patterning of experience among others. It cannot be *identified* with 'subjectivity' since we can also have the subjective experience of coming to an objective understanding of things, for example when we affirm our understanding of something as probably true (we are not saying it is probably true *to us*, but really so). Let me explain what I mean here.

It is common to refer to intentional actions as "mental events", suggesting that they are simply there, as "physical events" are. This, however, is misleading in the case mentioned above, namely, the experienced fact of sometimes actively 'standing by' certain standards of reasonableness as apt for the purposes of considering rival claims to truth. In taking responsibility for one's own contribution to the common growth of knowledge and understanding, one is becoming more present to oneself as being under certain normative demands – basically, to make something of one's intelligence. Nagel's example is, therefore, a special case of conscious experience, not definitive of it.

The key to my argument lies in the notion of "patterns of experience", which I take from the Canadian philosopher Bernard Lonergan, and which enables us to account for the data brought forward by Nagel, while not giving the impression that such experience exists *alongside* physical reality. What Nagel understands as the ineluctably subjective character of experience, Lonergan describes in terms of the idea of the biological pattern of experience which is characterized by extroversion, knowing through sense and imagination.(1970:181-184) Various patternings of our experience can be distinguished, according to how we are intentionally oriented.

Experience is not uniform, all of one kind, but is inevitably patterned according one or other schema. For example the biological patterning of experience is concerned with the success or failure of the organism. Along the aesthetic pattern, on the other hand, the biological drives are to some extent disregarded in favour of an interest in following the lines of a pattern which appeals primarily to one's imagination, and which evokes a wider range of emotions and desires.² The notion of the biological pattern of experience helps us to understand the confusion in Nagel's Cartesian construction of the dichotomy of the external (and "objective") and the internal (or "subjective") points of view (Nagel, 1979b:202). For such a dichotomy is, indeed, pertinent to this patterning of experience, whose intentional object Lonergan refers to as "the already out there now real". The latter has to do with objects to which we are oriented already before taking thought, objects of extroversion, "out there" resisting, as it were, our sensible probing of the world. (Lonergan, 1970:252)

But the dichotomy is not however of relevance to another patterning of experience, the intellectual, which aims at another kind of knowing, through experiencing, intelligent understanding and finally passing a reflective judgment on the adequacy or otherwise of one's grasp of the subject at hand. In the latter case, "sensible", "realistic" concerns of the biological organism are put aside in favour of the exigencies of the enquiring mind. "Objectivity" now comes to mean the goal of dealing with (raising and answering) all the questions relevant to the question posed to the understanding, and is not ineluctably contrasted with subjectivity.

Talk about "what it's like for . . ." does, indeed, make sense (can aim at objectivity) and is important. Sympathetic understanding of non-human animals (the same would apply for women understanding men, or vice-versa) is possible – of course this is a matter of degree.

CRITIQUE OF THE RATIONALIST TRADITION

The second main point of contention in Coetzee's approach centres on the problem of rational criticism of the tradition of rational criticism. Coetzee/Costello points out that reason only operates in conditions of some basic agreements about value or "what makes sense".

Discussion is possible only when there is common ground. When opponents are at loggerheads, we say: Let them reason together, and by reasoning clarify what their differences are, and thus inch closer. They may seem to share nothing else, but at least they share reason. (*Lives*, 66)

But, Costello argues, certain notions of what is reason would seem to so misrepresentative of what gives dignity to the person, that it will not be worthwhile engaging in discussion. He is thinking of the long tradition – he says it goes back through Descartes to Aquinas and to the Stoics and Aristotle – in which "reason" is opposed to "nature", cutting us off from the animal kingdom. We can see this illustrated in the contemporary social sciences, very largely premised on a procedural notion of reason, and very often an attendant physicalist, and reductionist, picture of reality. The whole domain of our values, commitments and concerns, whereby we are connected to society and to nature, is, since it is seen as ineluctably experiential and subjective, unable to get a foothold in the academic enterprise. As Coetzee says, "reason" seems a vast tautology: accept its premises (the Cartesian dichotomy) and the conclusion follows (value is co-extensive with human self-consciousness or rationality). But Coetzee suggests taking this concept of reason as applicable only to narrowly defined purposes within the range of uses of human thought. Reason is, then, simply "one tendency in human thought . . . the being of a certain spectrum of human thinking." (*Lives*, 23) Disengagement, a dimension of reasoning, has its place only within the framework of the subject first *engaging* themselves in the task at hand. And this brings to the fore the role of our emotional development, our capacity for empathy.

Coetzee suggests, then, that human thought should more properly be understood in the context of our fundamental human capacity for sympathy, its prime use being to help the heart. So, the question should not be, as with Nagel, do we have something in common with other animals – reason, self-consciousness, a soul (Nagel suggests we don't have enough of these in common). Rather, the question should be: How would it be were I in their place? This is a shift in orientation from a purely theoretical standpoint for discussion, to a practically oriented one. And the latter question challenges us subjectively, i.e. challenges our habitual value-orientation. To refuse the question is to close one's heart:

The heart is the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*, that allows us to share at times the being of another. Sympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object, the 'another,' as we see at once when we think of the object not as a bat ('Can I share the being of a bat?') but as another human being. There are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else, there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it. (*Lives*, 34-35)

A book which illuminates much of what Coetzee is saying is Mary Midgley's *Beast And Man* (1995). She refers to her own respect for the "great Western tradition" of using reason, but remarks that what needs investigating is, rather, the conditions that need to obtain if reason is to

operate at all – and that much of this can be discerned from a sympathetic study of animals. (1995: 253-254) Midgley wants to argue that rationality "includes a definite structure of preferences, a priority system based on feeling." (1995: 256) And that kind of structure is found in the higher animals, too. Appreciating our own nature is one with appreciating the life of animals.

Reason, in the philosophic tradition she and Coetzee are criticizing, has been sharply opposed to feeling or desire.

This has determined the attitude of most respectable philosophers to the related subjects of animals and human feelings. They have usually just dismissed animal activities from all comparison with human ones, on the general ground that, in man, decision is a formal, rational process, while animals have only feeling, which is a kind of wholly contingent slop or flow, bare matter without form, so that its analysis cannot concern philosophy (Midgley, 1995: 256-7).

"In fact," continues Midgley, "it can be our duty to *feel* in one way rather than another – something for which the tradition has little room. (Criticism of 'the undeveloped heart' is moral criticism.)" (1995: 259) So some preferences are more rational than others. "Rationality includes having the right priorities."

Midgley notes the influence on the rationalist tradition of the perceived need, in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, to counter nature worship. She refers (1995: 18, n.) to the detailed study of this attitude by John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature* (1971). Kant, too, she argues, in saying that only *rational* beings could evoke in us a necessary feeling of respect, was misled here by the Christian tradition. Respect for life in general, says Midgley, is not simply an inclination but "a feeling *that we must not* destroy certain things" (1995: 218). She continues,

Christianity, anxious to destroy primitive paganism, had made great efforts to exclude plants and animals from the area proper to such feeling by positive propaganda. (1995: 219)

Kant was thinking within this Stoic and Christian tradition when he made it a positive duty for man to recognize his superiority over and lack of indebtedness to nature. "As the singular being on earth that possesses understanding, he is certainly titular lord of nature" (in Midgley, 1995: 219). "If a man shoots his dog because the animal is no longer of service, he does not fail in his duty to the dog, *for the dog cannot judge*, but his act is inhuman and damages in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind" (in Midgley, 1995: 221).

At any rate, the higher animals also have a structure, the mark of *our* true humanity, of deep, lasting preferences. Both Midgley and Coetzee/Costello point out that Descartes had no access to the ethological studies, so revealing in this regard, of Jane Goodall, Konrad Lorenz, and so on. (Midgley, 1995: 231-232)

So what is the structure of human nature, and the place of feeling in it? Midgley quotes Bishop Butler, who refers to "the whole system, as I may speak, of affections, including rationality, which constitute the Heart". Reason as growing out of and completing a natural balance of parts (Midgley, 1995: 260-1).

Coetzee now applies this critique of the rationalist tradition to the philosophy of ecology. Ecology managers, he argues, have their mind on the system of interactions of which the individual creature is the earthly, material embodiment:

An ecological philosophy that tells us to live side by side with other creatures justifies itself by appealing to an idea, an idea of a higher order than any living creature. An idea, finally – and this is the crushing twist to the irony – which no creature except Man is capable of comprehending. (*Lives*, 54)

‘Reason’, he seems to be suggesting, is biased towards a kind of reductionism, whose aim is the uncovering of the forces which operate in a mechanistic way, and which is, therefore, incapable of appreciating the actual being of the animal itself.

Again in a discussion parallel to that of Midgley, Coetzee/Costello refers to Jonathon Swift’s satire, *Gulliver’s Travels*. If humans are more than Yahoos, they are not quite Houyhnhnms – neither beast nor god. If the horse stands for reason, Coetzee argues, then man stands for physical (one cannot say ‘brute’) force. This capacity for control by force both gives him his cosmic status but also brings a curse down upon him.(58)

What is meant here? To be cursed is to have one’s efforts, whatever they may be, all come to nothing. Coetzee is suggesting that our power of intelligence is circumscribed by our whole value orientation. Growth in understanding cannot simply be generated by an act of will, but depends on habits of interaction with others, habits formed through the influence of others, by the extent to which one is "connected in". The "control" attitude can work to one’s own disadvantage.

There is, then, a reason to be critical of the dominant intellectual tradition of reason. In modern epistemology, the kind of analysis suggested above is being systematically suppressed. In his critical attitude towards "reason", Coetzee is drawing upon a line of thought well known as far back as Nietzsche and the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer and Adorno point to the connections between an exploitative attitude to nature and the more general devaluing of human life, beginning with women:

For rational beings . . . to feel concern about an irrational creature is a futile occupation. Western civilization has left this to women. Women have no personal part in the efficiency on which this civilization is based. It is man who has to go out into an unfriendly world, who has to struggle and produce. Woman is not a being in her own right, a subject. . . . She became the embodiment of the biological function, the image of nature, the subjugation of which constituted that civilization’s title to fame. For millennia men dreamed of acquiring absolute mastery over nature, . . . Where the mastery of nature is the true goal, biological inferiority remains a glaring stigma, the weakness imprinted by nature as a key stimulus to aggression. (1972: 247-8)

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

I want to suggest here that the possibility of the rules of moral behaviour having an objectively binding force on us is intimately bound up with the fact of our connectedness to all living creatures in a way that warrants and calls forth our recognition and our empathy. This is not, except obliquely, at issue in *The Lives of Animals*. However, both Coetzee and Midgley

point to the fact that the loss of empathy with the natural lives of animals, and, in the case of Midgley, also with the tendencies of our own nature as shared with the animal kingdom, does have an impact on our capacity to be moral. Coetzee suggests (and Costello argues) that empathy – for animals or else for fellow humans – is indivisible. Midgley points out that demonizing the beast without is connected to demonizing the beast within, which sets up an effective obstacle to moral learning. It is our bestial tendencies that make up an integral part of our shared reality, defining our needs and providing the foundation for our recognition of value in itself – simply *there*, to be recognized and followed.

The plot of the novel, *Disgrace*, now well-known, revolves around the fall from respectability of Professor David Lurie at the Cape Technical University, formerly University of Cape Town, as a result of his ill-considered affair with a student, and his subsequent stay with his daughter on her small-holding in the Eastern Cape. As mentioned above, many people have found the novel overly pessimistic, in particular the rape of the central character's daughter, her acceptance that there is really no recourse to justice, and the connivance of her "co-proprietor", a new black farmer, in the deed; likewise the pathetic attempts at doing something for the neglected, abandoned dogs in the area, David Lurie assisting first to euthenize them and then to transport them to the incinerator.

This is a dysfunctional and immoral society. What propels Professor Lurie into the journey he undertakes in the book is the self-righteous Disciplinary Committee of the university who want him to make a show of contrition and public confession of the wrongness of his action. In the refusal of the central character to connive at this hypocritical pretence, couched in the religious language that still haunts the edges of our society, there are hints of something beyond. In this refusal to conform to the good person as delineated by "rational moral norms", we have a link with the critique of Professor Costello in *The Lives of Animals*.

The humanisation of South African society is a theme that pervades the narrative and seems linked to the deeply humanist approach in Coetzee's Tanner Lectures on Values. Is there a link? I asked the author earlier this year. He refused to be drawn out, but did say that the evocative cover photograph on the novel, of an abandoned, malnourished dog set against the backdrop of a bleak landscape indicating human neglect or decay, was chosen by the publishers, not himself.

David Lurie does not deny the wrongness of his actions. But the university Disciplinary Committee wants more, an expression of contrition, and he objects. "To a secular tribunal I pleaded guilty, a secular appeal," he explains. Again this is a comment on the lack of grounding, in contemporary culture, for the genuine inner goodness which the Disciplinary Committee is purporting to hold forth as a model. Is Lurie really 'in disgrace' or simply shocking the Mother Grundy feminist activists of the university? He stands, he says, "for the rights of desire. For the god who makes even the small bird quiver." What must he confess?

The Australian professor Costello has, I am told, resurfaced more recently at a public lecture of Coetzee's – "The Future of Humanism" – at the University of Cape Town, with this time, a sister who has been for many years a religious at Marianhill near Durban: the plot thickens! Marianhill is the Benedictine establishment, representing the premodern world, challenging the technocratic, instrumental rationality of modernity, the reasoning of "control".

The person to whom David Lurie has given his unconditional love is his daughter. But he has difficulty communicating with her. She becomes pregnant as a result of the rape and decides to keep the child, an act, as they say in the bleak corridors of the liberal, individualistic ethics of our Western tradition, of supererogation. "I am determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person. . . . You should try to be one too." "A good person. Not a bad

resolution, in dark times." And it is only when he faces the fact that he really doesn't understand her – and so also his own deepest longings – can he begin to grow. The growth process is not part of the plot. What is in the plot is the disturbing feeling that one cannot but pose this kind of question as to the possible reality of an overarching norm unifying one's desires.

Right to the end it is largely the Cartesian self, cut off from his feelings, that is the narrative voice, resisting learning ("I am not a child."), but playing imaginatively with the idea of 'being disgraced' – as he repeats to Bev Shaw, and to the Isaacs family in George. I take it that the work with stray, abandoned dogs is pivotal in the book. David Lurie helps in the clinic each Sunday to euthanize the dogs, but his own special job is to transport the corpses in their black bags to the incinerator. This service, if one wants to call it that, Lurie does, he says, "for himself. For his idea of the world." (*Disgrace*, 146) It is probably best termed "sacramental", that is to say, a symbolic action which is also intended to bring about or effect what it symbolizes.

The person he is helping is Bev Shaw. She is upholding standards of a decent life, without sentimentality; these dogs by no fault of their own do not make the grade. She accepts that, for now, society has that limited, dysfunctional, aspect to it. She is saying, "At least let us prevent cruelty, that would be going too far." Standards of behaviour, in this conception, refer to more than just our particular rules for living together – Lurie's world is one in which our well-being and the well-being of all living creatures are intertwined, person and world falling under one ultimate standard. A good person, then, is one who fills the need that is simply there. In saying, "No, not this", David Lurie is having his emotional strings retuned to this conception.

In the classical premodern tradition it is our nature as rational that founds morality. What is suggested by the writers discussed here, however, is rather the reverse: it is because we are morally – virtuously, intelligently, compassionately – connected to what is of value in itself – for ourselves, for others – that our rationality is possible. Recognizing common objective standards of enquiry for the exercise of our capacity for intelligence – what we understand by rationality – is part and parcel of such recognition of standards for behaviour in general. So we do not have to connect moral value with our *difference* from non-human animals, with our rationality understood as the capacity for detachment. This reified notion of a special place for man in the hierarchy of the universe is what is objected to in the contemporary philosophy represented by Midgley and Costello. We can now see how a slightly different foundation for objective moral standards can be given, in which the idea is that it is, as we have been arguing, precisely our capacity for sympathy, for feeling with other living creatures – not for rationality – that lies the foundation of the moral dimension of our lives. Here it is the givenness of the natural universe that generates moral imperatives. Indeed working sympathetically with animals could be part of this recapturing of that connectedness (with what is truly of value, for humans, for animals), and, conversely, it would be entailed by the acceptance of the objectively binding nature of moral rules.

Because we are inter-dependent, "value" takes on the meaning of not simply what is chosen, but also what is there by nature (we can't just get away with anything). The recognition of what is by nature of value can lead, over time, to a common agreement on common values, giving an objectively binding force – in general – to rules of moral behaviour.

NOTES

1. Compare: "I have never been much interested in proscriptions, dietary or otherwise. . . . I am more interested in what lies behind them." (*Lives*, 37)

2. The religious symbol, for example, appeals at least in part to one's aesthetic sense. Such a patterning of interests provides a foundation for a purely intellectual pattern of experience to be a realistic possibility, in which the wide range of emotions of the former pattern are narrowed to an interest simply in understanding. And it is in what Lonergan calls the dramatic pattern of experience, where one deals with others in the concrete world, that the dimension of moral value and choice is brought to the fore.

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CHAPTER IX

THE NATURE AND ROLE OF APPLIED ETHICS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

NKOSINATHI OWEN SOTSHANGANE

There is a widespread concern about corruption in public life. These days we hear a lot about acts of nepotism, theft, bribery, etc. from the public purse. Alongside this there is a general concern about maladministration and inefficiency in the public sector. Something seems to be going badly wrong. A clear code of ethics is required which specifies the guiding moral values or principles that will govern the public service and reduce or prevent the corrupt practices and unethical behavior in question. The basic premise of this paper is first to prove that applied ethics as an area of philosophy attempts to arrive at an understanding of the nature of human values, of how we ought to live and of what constitutes right conduct. We are often faced, at the same time, with the consideration of 'why we ought to act morally', for example, that there is a course of conduct which one ought morally to choose, irrespective of one's likes or dislikes. This action would be the right thing to do despite one's own self-interest or preferences. That is why we hold individuals responsible for the moral judgements they make, or ought to have made. This aspect of judgement making is the subject matter of moral philosophy and ethics. The fact that there is today corruption and maladministration must therefore be interpreted as a total absence of moral and ethical culture in the conduct of public service. What, if anything, needs to be done to lead a moral and ethical life? What could be a possible remedy to prevent or reduce the unprofessional practices in question?

THE BASIS AND NATURE OF THE MORAL AND ETHICAL

Most philosophers draw a distinction between 'ethics' and 'morality' while others treat these two concepts as synonymous. For example Gildenhuis (1990:8), Macklin (1982:3) and many other philosophers use the concepts 'ethics' and 'morality' interchangeably; these terms are concerned solely with the elucidation and justification of morality and more generally with questions about how one ought to live, about what could count as good reason for one person acting in this way rather than another, and about what constitutes a good life for human beings. Philosophers such as Kimmel (1996:5), Macklin (1982:3), Hoffman and Moore (1990:1) and others typically describe moral judgements as involving matters of right or wrong, ought or ought not, a good action or a bad one.

Meta-ethics, which was very influential among early Greek philosophers, has received renewed attention in recent years. We now live in a world in which there is a great deal of uncertainty about basic norms and values, and it is also a fact that many of the decisions that confront us these days are much more complex morally and ethically. That is why most philosophers are now expected to be so much more ethically sensitive than they used to be. Some philosophers see this as no more than a natural consequence of the increasing influence of morality on society in general. But others go further and interpret it as symptomatic of the transformation of philosophy into a new type of social institution. As its product becomes more tightly woven into the social fabric, philosophers have to perform new roles in which ethical considerations can no longer be swept aside. What all this means is that public institutions depend on the acceptable moral and ethical bases in order to flourish. It is then possible and even

desirable to develop a recipe for moral and ethical behavior among public institutions and public officials with the emphasis upon commitment to moral norms and values. This commitment needs to be supported by an ethical and moral culture in a particular institution. Although it is hard to pin down the meaning of ethics because the views that many people have about ethics are shaky, Hoffman and Moore (1990:1), Gildenhuis (1991:41) and many other philosophers support the conviction that: 'Ethics is the study of what is good or right for human beings'.

Dowling (*sajhe/satho* Vol. 13 No. 3, 1999, pp.18-19) also agrees that by 'ethical' or 'ethics' we mean established norms, practices, policies, rules, or codes intended to guide an individual in terms of good (bad) or right (wrong) behaviour.

In this definition it is obvious that an individual administrator is able to decide morally whether or not to accept or reject a particular ethical rule, or practice, as being a morally right way of behaving. It is obvious from this definition that ethics is a set of rules which sets out what constitutes good (bad) and right (wrong) behaviour. Such rules are usually directed at professional workers, guiding them in the way they ought to choose (or ought not to choose), or guiding them about what it is the right thing (or wrong thing) to do in a given kind of situation. For example, we talk of a moral or ethical person or of an act which is morally or ethically accountable. On what basis do we judge certain forms of human behaviour or decisions taken as right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable? According to Gildenhuis (1991:8), the moral consciousness of any public official will indicate the moral norms which ought to be adopted and integrated into his or her life, taking personal interests into account, as well as considering and protecting the interests of others is acting ethically.

According to Ziman, a scientist (*Science*, 12/04/98, Vol. 282 Issue 5395), ethical issues always involve interests or feelings. Ziman says that ethics is not just an abstract intellectual discipline, it is about the conflicts that arise in trying to meet real human needs and values¹. But being ethical, clearly is not a matter of following one's interests or feelings. A person following his or her feelings may recoil from doing what is right; in fact, one's interests might frequently deviate from what is ethical. Velasquez on business ethics (1982:12), also confirms the notion of the necessity of morality and he says:

The moral point of view . . . does not evaluate standards according to whether or not they advance the interests of a particular individual or group, but goes beyond personal interest to a universal standpoint in which everyone's interests are impartially counted as equal.

To act morally in the public service environment means ensuring that the consequences of the public services are not detrimental to others, or to put this more positively, ensuring that public service activities contribute towards the personal well-being of others and of societies at large. But this depends on the gradual creation of a political and public climate favouring impartiality, trustworthiness, a sense of responsibility and accountability, and the maintenance of a high degree of ethical and moral standards in the public sector. For example, it is more important to look honest than it is to get anything done².

Since we live in a world in which there is a great deal of uncertainty about basic norms and values, many decisions that confront public officials these days are much more morally and ethically complex. As a result, in the academic field, the subject of philosophy is now striving for excellence in the teaching of ethics in all disciplines. The objective is to develop well-qualified public servants who are impartial and consistent, and who are practically competent persons

ready to serve in both public and private sectors. Today the demand is to have well qualified personnel with unquestionable integrity who preserve high ethical standards under all circumstances. In the past few years there has been a growing interest worldwide in the ethics of various spheres of life. We talk of ethics or introducing ethics or philosophy as a subject to be taught not only in academic institutions, but also throughout social, political, economical, and legal life. The emergence of this interest in many fields of studies means that ethics is now recognized as an important subject. Let us now turn to actions which justify the need of ethical and moral conduct in, to start with, social, political, economic and legal life.

CORRUPTION AND MALADMINISTRATION AS MORAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

What may be publicly considered as a most reprehensible act in one society may not be given similar treatment in another. Consequently, the preparation of a list which includes all forms of unethical conduct is difficult and may be dangerously misleading. However, the following are examples of those activities that according to Dwivedi (1978:8) are generally considered unethical in many countries:

- *Bribery, theft, nepotism;
- *Conflict of interests (including such activities as financial transactions to gain personal advantage),
- *Misuse of insider knowledge;
- *Protecting incompetence;
- *Regulating trade practice or lowering standards in such a manner as to give advantage to one or to family members,
- *The use and abuse of official and confidential information for private purposes.

Such activities may produce many disadvantages for a society. For example, inefficiency, mistrust of government and its employees, distortion of programme achievements, waste of public resources, encouragement of racial discrimination and eventual national instability. Under what circumstances are these actions called corrupt? It seems best to start by citing an example. By 'corruption' we intend 'the violation of the intent of explicit official laws, rules, and purposes for purposes of personal gain or the advancement of the private agenda'. If, for example, one violates an explicit and public rule in order to further the interests of a private company or corporation, so that its interests come to replace those of the public, this person is guilty of corruption. Samuel Huntington [in Ekpo (1979:314)] writes:

Corruption is a behaviour by public officials, which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve their private ends.

Corruption takes place when a public servant, in defiance of prescribed norms, breaks the rules to advance his or her personal interests. We are concerned here with public office or public institutions together with public officials, which behave in both unexpected and unacceptable ways. What constitutes unexpected and unacceptable behaviour may seem to be a rather personal and individual judgement, but to some extent they are members of groups with ground rules regulating behaviour. Regardless of how dedicated they may be to personal gratification, group members operate under some constraints if the group is to survive. If any group as a public

institution is to continue as an operating entity, there must be some agreement among the members regarding how they are to act towards one another and at least a tacit consensus on what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. What is at issue is the existence of a standard of behaviour according to which some actions break some rules, written or unwritten, regarding the proper purposes to which a public office or a public institution may be put. For example, if a person is able to use his or her influence to gain or receive something that is not justified under a country's legal and administrative regulations. Dwivedi (1978:15), 'Corruption can exist only if there is someone willing to corrupt and is capable of corruption'³ .

On the other hand, Ekpo (1979) argues that corruption in a modernized society is thus, in part, not so much the result of deviance of behaviour from accepted norms, as it is the deviance of norms from the established patterns of behaviour. New standards and criteria of what is right and wrong lead to a condemnation of, at least, some traditional behaviour patterns as corrupt.

What is at issue in all the cases of corruption cited is the existence of a standard of behavior according to which the action in question breaks some rule, written or unwritten, about the proper purposes to which a public office or a public institution is put. The moralist, for example, has his or her own idea of what the rule should be. The actors in the situations concerned create their rules. It may be the same as the moralist (they may regard themselves as corrupt); or quite different (they may regard themselves as behaving honorably according to their standards, and regard their critics' standards as irrelevant); or they may be "men of two worlds", partly adhering to two standards which are incompatible, and ending up exasperated and indifferent (they may recognize no particular moral implications of the acts in question at all – which obviously is quite common). Corruption naturally tends to weaken or to perpetuate the weakness of the government bureaucracy. In this respect, it is incompatible with political, social and economic development. "The corruption of one government, . . . is the generation of another"⁴ .

Corruption and maladministration are among the most important unethical (wrong) conduct in the public sector. Current writing about corruption has attempted to challenge the earlier speculation that corruption is a phenomenon with no negative consequences. Huntington (1979:313) has argued that corruption takes place when a civil servant is in defiance of prescribed or accepted norms, breaking the rules to advance his or her personal interests. Thus it is the behavior which deviates from the duties of one's public role because of private pecuniary or status gains or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private influence. This includes such behavior as bribery (if a public official accepts gifts from thankful members of the public, for services rendered, this does not count as gratitude but as bribery); nepotism (which is a use of the power to advance the interests of friends or of a member of one's family); misappropriation (which is illegal appropriation of public resources for private use); theft (which is taking money or property meant to benefit the public with the intention of permanently depriving the public of it); etc.

To maintain a high level of integrity in the public sector is an absolute necessity. However, according to Caiden (1982:16), those who mean to take charge of the affairs of government should remember two of Plato's rules:

Firstly, to keep the good of the people clearly in view so that regardless of their own interests they will make their action conform to public interests; and

Secondly, to care for the welfare of the public and not serve the interests of a certain individual so as to betray the rest.

Put differently, today the demand is for the impartial treatment of all relevant similar cases, men and women, black and white, young and old, rich and poor. According to Plato, deviation from these expectations contributes to the immoral and unethical actions. In 1983 the World Bank observed [Gould and Amaro-Reyes (1983:3)] that a general attitude of ambivalence and disrespect for such rules is a characteristic cause of unethical acts. Many philosophers wrote extensively to show circumstances under which some actions are called corrupt. For example, in John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, when assessing beliefs, actions and practices in terms of their being morally right or wrong, only the consequences (or results) count: 'an action is right if it results in the general happiness, wrong if it does the reverse'.

The general happiness results if we tolerate all other-regarding individual actions⁴. The purpose of the institution of morality, utilitarians insist, is to promote welfare by minimizing harms and maximizing benefits. In short corruption is wrong insofar, as it tends to produce pain and displeasure. If corruption and maladministration neither promote pleasure nor prevent pain for the general good they are not morally wrong from a utilitarian point of view. It is generally accepted that administration must be efficient in the sense that the objectives of public policy are securely attained without unnecessary delay, discourtesy, losing of records, failure to answer effectively, and so forth. Administrative officials must satisfy the general body of citizens that they are proceeding with reasonable regard to promote the balance between the public and private interests.

Ware (1973:11), on the other hand, describes maladministration as an action based on, or influenced by, improper considerations or improper conduct of the public affairs. The matters handled by public officials, no matter how small and unimportant they seem to them, usually are very important to the individual claimant or client. According to Fieldman (1977:80-87), in any community without a general consensus on moral norms and values, authentic and sound society is actually impossible. Gildenhuis (1991:44) describes maladministration as 'a wrong action' because maladministration frequently transgresses the ethical norm of "respect of other persons". In brief, this means that showing respect to others, is how everyone wants to be treated him or herself.

This presupposes a number of practical conditions. For example, if a public official considers an act to be personally morally right, he or she must consider any relevant similar act to be right for the same reasons. This is one version of the principle of impartiality, that is, 'I should respect others (as persons) because this is how I would want to be treated myself'⁵. Among many underlying philosophical questions we need to consider this ethical norm are when one says that the public official is morally obliged to show respect for other persons, what exactly is he or she supposed to do; why should they show such respect; how exactly are they to show this respect?

Kant, on the other hand, (1972:91) puts the matter in the following way: Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end. Kant is convinced that all rationally thinking people should be able and willing to ascribe to a basic rule that can be expressed in the following formula: 'Always act in such a way that you are willing to make the principle of your action into a universal law'⁶.

The idea is that officials should treat other people as ends in themselves, never as means to their own ends. This means that each person's interests should be counted as being of equal value. I may justify the principle in roughly the same way as Kant by arguing that it is rational to

treat all *prima facie* like cases. Thus, Kant wishes public officials to ask themselves two questions before deciding on a certain course of action or practice:

- What would the world look like where the principle of action that is considered here becomes the basis of everyone's action?
- Would we be willing to live in such a world? (cf. Velasquez (1985:70)).

Velasquez is convinced that such a strategy would improve the quality of moral decision-making and enhance the respect that people pay one another. This is a principle of consistency. There is a strand of thought associated with Kant, according to which an assessment of any judgement in terms of being morally right or wrong must include considerations of consistency and impartiality. Roughly, the required rendering of consistency states that:

When a person considers an action to be morally right (good, obligatory), he or she must consider any relevant similar act to be right for the same reasons, and this must apply to any moral judgement that is universally conceded.

The concept of corruption, that is, bribery, graft, patronage, nepotism, fraud, theft, etc., does not vary between Christian and Muslim, African and European, American and South African, primitive man and Minister of the Crown. To maintain a high level of integrity in the public sector is an absolute necessity. The purpose of ethics in the public sector is to eliminate the uncertainty between what seems to be right and what is in effect wrong. As the practical problems of maladministration and corruption are ethical issues, solving these problems lies within the precepts of ethics. Ethics is a moral science, an exposition of what is good or bad, right or wrong. Ethics is concerned with the development of human behaviour according to certain moral norms. What is judged morally wrong will be always wrong, especially if it has deleterious effects, and of course, if it is destructive and incompatible with a system of public order. Corruption is among the most important manifestations of unethical conduct in the public sector. Let us now consider some measures to prevent or reduce unprofessional actions or the practices in question.

POSSIBLE REMEDIES FOR CORRUPT PRACTICES AND MALADMINISTRATION

The issue of remedies is only a small part of the large subject of how to ensure good public administration. Although it is small, it is important, and likely to become increasingly so. As a matter of fact, much is currently being said and written about the possible remedies or measures to control both corruption and maladministration. It would be a mistake to think that there is no cause for everyone's concern, particularly philosophers or ethicists. Public service decisions and actions are thought to need more social, political, economic, and legal control. A new focus on the moral-ethical aspects of public life is called for. It is essential that measures exist; even if they cannot eradicate corruption and maladministration completely, at least they can play an effective role in controlling occurrence of both unethical and immoral actions or practices in question.

It is essential to remember that both corruption and maladministration pervade the entire environment and do not necessarily focus on a particular area, and that whatever measures will be implemented need to take into account the broad spectrum of both occurrences. In my

opinion, corruption refers unequivocally to blatant and deliberate dishonesty in the use of public money and goods, while maladministration is rather a dysfunctional condition in which the taxpayer is the loser but in which the official is not necessarily enriched. These two phenomena, however, are closely related and could possibly be placed on a continuum with corruption as the extreme pole on the negative side. But when remedies are being considered it quickly becomes clear that one has to do with differing issues, although there are points of contact. Wheare (1973:11) described maladministration as:

Administrative action (or inaction) based on or influenced by improper considerations or conduct. Arbitrariness, malice or bias, including discrimination, are examples of improper considerations. Neglect, unjustifiable delay, failure to observe relevant rules and procedures, failure to take relevant considerations into account, failure to establish or review procedures where there is a duty or obligation on a body to do so, are examples of improper conduct or maladministration.

In sum, corruption and maladministration result in an erosion of confidence in many public institutions and its public servants. Practically all countries have enacted some kind of corrective and punitive measures to deal with ethical offenses in public service. It seems profitable to consider the nature of ethics in the light of what qualities one would expect to find in public officials who are to serve society effectively. The parallel step now is to ask what qualities one would look for in a public official. There are certain beliefs, items of knowledge, abilities, that *qua* public officials need if they are effectively to use the formal criteria (as they must if they are rational) and more especially if they want to flourish in their conduct of public affairs:

1. In order to be able to respect other persons, an official needs to believe in the importance of their needs and their interests as other persons like themselves.

2. In order to be impartial, the official ought to see a given situation from the other person's point of view, as well as his own. If this is correct, then he or she will need the ability to understand the emotional states and feelings of others as well as his or her own.

3. A more practical implication of the rule concerns the knowledge of such things as the relevant area of the law, the social norms, the conventional expectations of society at large and of different social groups. This means that he/she should be adequately informed.

4. Another practical ability the official needs is that of communicating his or her thoughts and feelings to others consistently.

5. The official needs also to have thought out choices of actions and possible ways of dealing with problems in advance of situations requiring a rapid response. That is why such positions require training and qualifications.

6. Finally, a public official needs to develop a motive to behave in a way that fulfils the idea of showing respect to others, even when they are troublesome or disrespectful towards him.

Taken together all these qualities constitute a quite extensive positive element implied by the Kantian notion of respect for other persons. In the final analysis, however, these measures can be truly effective only if political leaders denounce unethical conduct, especially by setting exemplary conduct for the community in general. Any attempt to prepare ethical guidelines which are universally applicable is exceedingly difficult. What is more feasible is to suggest general principles, which may be modified depending upon the unique needs of a particular

country and its special administrative units. According to Dwivedi (1978:25), the general principles which should govern the conduct of a public servant are based on the premise that the maintenance of high standards of honesty, integrity and impartiality are essential to assure proper performance of government tasks, the maintenance of public trust and the confidence and respect of the citizens for their government.

To achieve a high standard and to prevent and discourage the occurrence of unethical activities, public servants must know what those activities are and what remedial action may be taken against infractions. A set of ethical guidelines or a code of conduct serves this purpose. The foundation for a code of ethics is the provisions of law relating to public offences, the requirements of public service, and the performance of public servants. It is important to recognize that the existence of an official code does not in itself impute any lack of integrity and honesty on the part of employees. Rather its main objective is to assist employees in determining the proper course of action when faced with uncertainty regarding the propriety of a contemplated action. The main aim is to prevent employees from unwittingly falling into a situation of conflict of interest, to guide them away from perversion of their integrity by bribery, theft, nepotism, fraud or other corrupt inducements, to help them identify what is permissible and what is not, and to indicate possible courses of action when the impermissible threatens or is brought to their knowledge. According to Steinberg and Austen (1990:33-34) acceptance of public employment adds new factors, namely, that of confidence in the integrity of government and ethical practice on the part of elected, appointed officials. Like it or not, public officials are bound to accept the admonition which says: 'do not pervert justice or show partiality, do not accept a bribe, for bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.' An ancient line of philosophical thought attempts to demonstrate that to act rationally is to act ethically⁸.

CONCLUSION

The key contribution of this paper to the public officials in their conduct of public affairs is to recommend such moral principles as: consistency, impartiality, responsibility, accountability, trustworthiness, and maintenance of a high degree of ethical and moral standards in the public sector. Hence the mission is to develop more who are well informed in the light of the qualities the community should expect to find in them as public servants with unquestionable integrity, who preserve high ethical standards under all circumstances. According to Cloete (1992:171) public functionaries should always be informed of the rules which apply in the work situation and which govern their conduct.

To discover the nature of ethical life with the moral principles central to good public administration is an intellectual task similar to the discovery of mathematical truths. Just as untrained people cannot know the latter, though they may accidentally hit upon the correct answer, so the former cannot be known either. Only as a result of the right kind of training does one have the capacity to know what is moral. Only if a public official has knowledge of objective moral principles can he or she be assured of leading an ethical and moral life. From this argument it follows that training is necessary for the high practical skills required and relevant for positions of public service.

NOTES

1. The Official ethos of the public administration systematically shuts out all such considerations. This is what Frank Anechiaro and Lerone Kuo believed in (Municipal Agency Commissioner in the New York City, 1991), *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 25 No. 1, Spring 1995, pp. 147-161.
2. On this point see Dwivedi (1978), *Public Service Ethics*, University of Guelth: Guelth.
3. See Harrington, J. (1950), *A History of Political Thought*, rev. ed. New York, Henry Holt.
4. According to Mill, J.S. (1960), people choose to follow the rules which in any situation maximizes the general happiness, that which produces the most benefit to the largest number of people.
5. According to Downie and Telfer (1969:93), showing respect to others as persons is how everyone want to be treated himself and this presupposes a number of practical conditions.
6. The best known proponent of such a rule based theory is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).
7. Colin Leys says this when arguing about "What is the Problem about Corruption?" See *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 3 No. 2, 1965, p. 217.
8. From the context of this paper, it follows that a code of ethics, stipulated as a set of rules which sets out what constitutes good or bad, right or wrong behavior is necessary to lay down the general principles upon which more specific provisions may be built as required by individual circumstances. This is to identify moral principles central to good public administration.

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