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Comparative Ethics in a Global Age

edited by
Marietta T. Stepanyants

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Introduction

As the world enters upon a global age human actions and interactions are endlessly extended and interwoven. This takes place in the economic and political order, but even more in the order of information and communication. We now live and act together across the previous barriers of mountains, deserts and seas.

At the same time we have ever greater power to oppress and destroy. Yet justice still refuses to be reduced to Thrasymachus': 'The just is to do what is for the advantage of the stronger' (*Republic*, 341a1), i.e., might makes right. Peace will elude us until the nature and modes of cooperation in the good can be understood, broadened and applied between ever more diverse peoples and cultures.

In this urgent context the present work takes on exceptional importance. If circumstances were unchanging and one could simply replicate ancient wisdom, whether of the East or West, the North or South, the task of philosophy would be vastly simplified. In reality we hurtle forward into ever changing and opening horizons, engaging more deeply ever more diverse peoples and cultures.

It becomes imperative then that ethics as the mode by which peoples understand, evaluate and direct their action be enriched. First, it is necessary to develop better understanding of the ethics which guide the peoples with whom we now live; second, it is necessary to broaden our modes of evaluation in order to take into account not only our own path but those of others; third, it is necessary to coordinate the direction of action in ways that are cooperative and mutually promotive for all.

This is the special, and the especially challenging, task of a comparative ethics in our day. It is as well the task which the authors of this volume have taken upon themselves, convoked by Professor Marietta T. Stepanyants, director of the Center for Oriental Philosophies Studies, of the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow.

The studies carried out here appear to order themselves in four parts. Part I concerns the possibility of a global ethics and indeed of any ethics in these post-modern times. It serves to identify the elements and developments needed for ethics in global times. The subsequent parts search for these elements. Thus, Part II concerns the Chinese tradition with its stress on harmony. In Part III Hindu and Buddhist cultures enrich this with their sense of the interior life. Part IV reflects Islamic philosophy's strong religious and metaphysical contribution.

Part I "A Global Ethics" concerns the notion and possibility of ethics in general and of a global ethics in particular. On the one hand, Chapter I by Karsten J. Struhl, "Is a global ethic possible," states the need for a global ethics, but sees this as depending on the development of a global culture which is only now in the making and may always be "in process". Yet this does not

mean that efforts at a global ethics cannot have heuristic value, subtly guiding or drawing all in a convergent direction.

Chapter II by Abdussalam A. Guseinov, “Is Absolute Morality Possible in Modern Pluralistic Society?” takes the argument a step further by conceiving morality as self-obligation and self-control. In these broad terms he would see an absolute morality as essential and even as an antidote to the danger of elevating what is only culturally relative to an absolute position.

Chapter III by Marietta T. Stepanyants, “The Golden Mean as a Metaphorical Key to Understanding: The General and the Particular in Moral Philosophy,” turns to the golden means found in the various forms in the wisdom and ethics of most cultures. Perspicaciously, however, she distinguishes between: (a) the circumstances where this guides the person to new heights of humane global sensitivity, and (b) an imposed state ethics which exercises a leveling influence toward a least common denominator. The latter is often the case where law, which can only place minimum obligations, is taken as the ethical standard.

On the other hand, there are those who would see the search for absolute or global ethical guidance, even in the sense of a mean sought by each person, as pathological. Thus Chapter IV by Hans-Georg Moeller, “Morality and Pathology: A Comparative Approach,” turns to Daoism and Niklas Luhmann to describe the search for morality as infecting human discourse with a destructive distinction of good vs evil. This can set peoples against one another and destroy communication and cooperation. It is a rhetoric heard in the “war against terrorism” and “evil,” all of which are to be exterminated. Yet is not an inability to distinguish good from bad the ethical equivalent of the airplane pilot unable to differentiate up from down. The point is not merely rhetorical, for the modern Western aversion to metaphysics which has removed the ability to speak of the good has undermined ethics of any sort.

Thus Chapter V by Roger Smith, “‘The Science of Man’ and Moral Philosophy: Relations of Facts and Values,” and Chapter VI by Richard Rorty, “From Religion through Philosophy to Literature: The Way Western Intellectuals Went,” illustrate this loss of the ability to establish a normative ethics. They see a progressive passage first from religion as bringing moral guidance from above and then from natural science as providing knowledge of an objective human nature or state of affairs from below. These authors turn attention rather to the way in which one constructs one’s life after the manner in which one constructs a novel or narrative. Rorty sees this as leaving philosophy behind in the historical sequence of the search for the source of redemption first in religion, then in philosophy and finally in literature as a matter of human self-reliance and creativity.

This directs our attention to the present quandary. For we have found with Quine that the supposed basic objectivity of empiricism is based on two unsustainable dogmas. Moreover, we fear that a deontological ethics restricted to abstract principles provides for ideology but does not help in the direction of concrete human action – and may even destroy attention to the unique dignity and freedom of persons. Hence, we must either abandon philosophy or

develop it in new ways. It must become capable of working with the elements of human subjectivity which generate values and virtues and of the aesthetic which can integrate the vast cultural diversity of our global context. This is the challenge now faced by philosophy without which we are reduced, in Shakespeare's words, to life as a tale indeed, but one that is told by an idiot, manipulated by Plato's rogue or dictated by his Thrasymachus. Ethics remains a task for philosophy, but philosophy must grow if it is to meet the challenge. This directs the attention of comparative philosophy to a search for needed resources which have become newly available in these global times.

Certainly, it is unfortunate that modern rationalism became so restrictive for some that in order to search for a path that exceeds the power of human reason to manipulate data – which in any case is no longer recognized as objective – they have come to feel that philosophy must be abandoned for literature. What is good in this, however, is that it points to the essential role of human interiority, creativity and freedom in constructing one's life. This is the direction in which philosophy needs to seek new resources from traditions not shrunken by Enlightenment. If a way can be found to integrate and expand, rather than to dismiss, the work of philosophy then the chapters of Smith and Rorty are important, if radical, steps. This, indeed, would seem to be the cumulative burden of this book.

Fred Dallmayr points in this direction in his Chapter VII, "Global Ethics: Beyond Universalism and Particularism," in searching to wed universal norms and theories with moral praxis. For a global age he would stress a unity, not a divorce, of morality and politics. This contrasts to the stoic withdrawal into universal norms and the self-righteous interventions critiqued in Chapter IV by H.-G. Moeller. Once again philosophy is challenged to face – now in ethics – its classical issue of the one and the many. It must not be supposed that philosophy has yet developed the ability to do so. This challenge is instead the warrant not for leaving philosophy for the imaginative realm of literature, but rather for engaging and guiding one's capabilities for action. Since Aristotle this has been the understanding ethics as pertaining not to the speculative but to the practical order, and to the need to perfect human responsibility for what we do.

In sum, from Part I we have the suggestion that ethics must be further developed for global times, but that such a development will take it beyond the historic limits of modern rationalism which obtains its rigor by moving to an abstract or formal order that leaves particular application arbitrary. But neither does it appear that the free play of a narrative imagination implemented by a pragmatic utilitarianism is able to determine what is truly useful in guiding and improving the exercise of human life.

In this context attention has shifted toward enriching objectivity with subjectivity and from the universal and formal toward the concrete exercise of human freedom. This constitutes for philosophy a progressive development of the integrating vision of human life and opens the way for the needed development of an ethic capable of taking account of the multiple cultures of a global age. This is signaled by the shift in interest from the first and second of

Kant's Critiques to the third, the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, in order to add to universal principles an acknowledgement of the multiple cultures and civilizations and of the task of enabling them to live and act together in newly global times.

But if modernity itself needs to be surpassed, not least due to its leveling inability to take account of the cumulative creative freedom of humankind of which cultures and cultural traditions are formed, then it becomes newly important for ethics in these post modern global times to begin to compare the ethical content of the multiple ancient cultures which have not yet been subjected to the abstractive forces of modernity. For this the volume turns to three great philosophical traditions in order to draw upon their insights.

Part II "The Confucian Tradition". Here Chapter VIII by Yelena Staburova, "New Confucianism and Problems of Interpretation," studies the effort to create a synthesis between Chinese and Western philosophies. She considers this to be impossible due to the inherent logic of the two. Yet she does recall an idea proposed earlier, namely, that whereas a systematic unity may not be possible, nonetheless the different cultures could turn in each other's direction. For her this is not to see them as the same or even as convergent, but the hope little by little all might become accustomed to the diversity. Beyond this a global age appears to be forcing us to proceed beyond mere tolerance of one another for we are forced now to interact. If so even the logic may need to be transformed into more inclusive and interactive categories. There was a time when Euclidian geometry was considered universally sovereign. Now, however, multiple geometries are recognized and L. Apostle develops in African logic: African Philosophy: Myth or Reality (Ghent: University of Ghent). This invites important philosophical progress for a global age.

Sor-Hoon Tan in Chapter IX, "Cultural Crossings against Ethnocentric Currents: Toward a Confucian Ethics of Communicative Virtues," begins to suggest resources in Confucian ethics which might make this possible. Interestingly this is not done independently of Habermas' communication ethics; on the contrary, a search into Confucianism for its communicative virtues is suggested thereby.

Even when Confucians were ethnocentric, the virtue of co-humanity (ren 仁, more often translated as benevolence), a disposition to relate well with others, tempered its hostility to other cultures. One with such disposition prefers peaceful coexistence with other cultures, even doing his best to win them over with kindness. This virtue realizes the exemplary person (junzi 君子) as a relational self; in its exercise, self-cultivation and contribution to the growth of the network of human relations, in which one is embedded, are mutually constituting. While recognizing a gradation in love toward different 'others,' humanistic Confucianism encourages a widening of the circle and an ever-increasing inclusiveness

of the others whom the virtue could reach. This virtue of co-humanity, which Confucius explained to his student Fan Chi as “Love others” (Analects 12.22), should underlie all cross-cultural communication, for it ensures an ethical orientation toward the good of all involved.

Humanistic Confucianism requires that ‘analogy’ be extended beyond ‘our kind’ as defined culturally to the entire human species, even the entire cosmos. What is found in Confucius turns out to be of the greatest moment for cross-cultural communication and points to ways for addressing the impass stressed by Yelena Staburova in the previous chapter. The last two chapters of this Part present strikingly contrasting views of Confucianism first in metaphysical and religious terms and then in naturalist terms.

Artem I. Kobzev in Chapter X, “The Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an “Infantile” Teaching of Defying Death by Life,” follows the path of life by an analysis of the attention to the young, the infant, even to the fetus and seed as pointing to the emphasis upon life overcoming the chaos of death. This he sees as key to the Chinese sense of life and the genetic root of Chinese philosophy. But here the symbolic nature of the representations and their ritual employment suggest that the significance of the role of the child and infant goes notably beyond a celebration of physical existence, as in the Olympic games, to the issue of the source and hence the character of life itself.

Roger T. Ames in Chapter XI, “Confucianism and Deweyan Pragmatism: A Dialogue,” reads Confucian philosophy through Dewey’s pragmatism. As Dewey’s epistemology was very much the product of the line of British empiricism which goes back through Locke to late medieval nominalism this effort can model analytically what Chinese culture could develop through a purely “trial and error” process enhanced by a pragmatic ethical theory. Roger Ames applies this tool in his study of Confucianism. It could join Richard Rorty’s effort in Chapter VI to draw out the humanistic significance of the Confucian stress on ritual and propriety through a pragmatism that finally washes out philosophy in favor of literature.

Confucius may have more to suggest, however, for the pragmatism of Dewey and James died when the strict application of his empiricism by the positivists showed that it was not sufficient for setting the goals needed in order to turn possibilities into pragmatic projects. But, in turn, Quine soon showed the rigorous empiricism of logical positivism to be not only unsustainable but illogical, and hence it was soon swept aside by analysis. Moreover the sense of harmony and the human transformation of the ordinary into the elegance of ritual points to an intellectual and aesthetic sense that far exceeds the empiricists pragmatic manipulation of things for practical goals. In this lie the roots of a great civilization echoed in Ames’ concluding paragraph.

This would have been the place to begin rather than to end, for taking the chapter in this sense points further precisely to the aesthetic dimension of a life of meaning and value. This is the issue of global intercultural times.

Whence this is derived and how it can be developed in terms of human dignity, rather than of brute power, is the issue for comparative philosophy in our day.

Part III “The Hindu and Buddhist Traditions”. While the Hindu tradition is deeply metaphysical, here the related chapters use rather Western methods, often analytic in character. This keeps them from the essential metaphysical grounding of the Indian tradition, which surprisingly turns up more in the last chapters on the supposedly non-metaphysical Buddhist tradition.

Michel Hulin in Chapter XII, “Transmigration in the 21st Century, or the Future of an Illusion,” turning to a psychological explanation studies different forms in which transmigration has appeared. In this light its pragmatic “truth” lies only in its fulfilling the function of opening positive and meaningful prospects for individuals. Thus for the author the reality of transmigration is limited to that of a massive collective certitude or myth. The deep Hindu sense of transmigration lies far beyond this, however, in the drama of good and evil that is at the heart of any ethics. It would be of special interest to see how this could be understood in global terms and, were it not reductivist, the author’s attention to collective certitudes could be of service.

R.C. Pradhan in Chapter XIII, “Moral Values in the Multi-Cultural Context: An Indian Approach,” **proceeds rather in analytic terms and concerns** the fear that what is relevant in one cultural context is not relevant in another. His approach is to abstract to the higher generability of universal moral values which thereby loses engagement in the diversity of the present global context. However, the use of the expression “moral fabric of the universe” might suggest a way beyond a choice of a distant universality without application or a moral relativism without unity. Pradhan concludes that “moral philosophy in the multi-cultural context must take a spiritual turn to rediscover the universal and eternal moral values. The deeper unity of mankind must be sought in what Kant calls Reason or what Sri Aurobindo calls the Spirit.”

Rajendra Prasad in Chapter XIV, “On ‘Moral Right’ and the ‘Morally Right’: From Logical Right to Moral Right,” discusses “logical right” and being “logically right,” as well as moral rights. The latter are considered role dependent or at least attached thereto in some manner. In contrast, the classical Hindu tradition would take this much further as a matter of moral life and ultimately of liberation. Again the analytic procedure leaves one detached from the grounds and meaning of Hindu thought.

In chapter XV, “Good as a Category of Indian Philosophy,” Vladimir K. Schokhin attends directly to the relation between Indian and Western tradition in philosophy by pointing out the desire of many fine Indian scholars to use such Western terms as ‘values’ for the ‘good’ in Hindu and Buddhist thought. The titles of the articles he cites by T.M.P. Mahadevan manifest a concern to show the relevance of Hindu thought to philosophical discussions especially in England. Nevertheless Mahadevan’s work is above all grounded in, and focused upon, the classical commentaries of Shankara which are most deeply concerned with unfolding the metaphysical grounding of the good and

indeed of beauty in the Brahma as sat-cit-ananda. Thus Mahadevan's short work: *Philosophy of Beauty* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969) could serve as an important bridge to the philosophical effort to develop an ethics for global intercultural times.

Viktoria Lyssenko in Chapter XVI, "The Hard Task of Hitting the Mean: Aristotle's Mean (Mesotes) and Buddha's Middle Path (Majjhimā Paṭipadā)," takes up a theme introduced by Marietta T. Stepanyants in Chapter III, namely, the search for the mean in moral philosophy. Lyssenko compares in this regard Aristotle and Buddha. She sees this doctrine of the mean as orienting the reasoning of both in a convergent manner. Yet she recognizes ethical, religious and metaphysical difficulties in this comparison. Aristotle would see the sage who has attained the mean as capable of a stable self-sufficient contemplative life. In some contrast, Buddha sees life as a continual struggle to overcome suffering and as pointing beyond to nivana, which is of another, even transpersonal, order. This may be helpful in the effort to surpass the individualism and materialism which lead only to competition that subverts a just and therefore peaceful order.

Eguchy Mitsuru in Chapter XVII, "L. Tolstoy's Non-Resistance Teaching and D. Ikeda's Idea of Non-Violence: A Comparative Essay," focuses his discussion on the contemporary political terms of "non resistance" and "non violence" with an implicit comparative consideration of Tolstoy's Christianity and Ikeda's Buddhism. Both move beyond normative ethics and go more deeply.

A person, who has realized his/her nature or has achieved inner comprehension of God, obtains a natural capacity for optimal modes of behavior and in no way needs any conventional norms. This world view is based on the theories of non-violence of Buddhism and Tolstoy. A person who has overcome the dual state of consciousness that opposes one to the rest of the outer world is permeated by love towards this world and enjoys a harmony of existence within it. When a human being becomes conscious of one's inseparability from the rest of the world and feels oneself a particle of the stream of life, this person begins to care for all living creatures as for oneself, demonstrating compassion with them.

Part IV "The Islamic Tradition". Nur Kirabaev in Chapter XVIII, "The Philosophy of Power: Al-Mawardi and Al-Ghazali," begins this exploration in the direction suggested by Fred Dalmayer in the previous chapter, namely by looking at the relation of ethics to political theory and practice. For this he studies the thought of al-Mawardi, al-Juwayni and his student, al-Ghazali. This analysis uncovers a way not of suppressing religious authority, but of relating it to the changing historical, legal and political situation.

Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud in Chapter XIX, "Al-Attas' Concept of Ta'dib as True and Comprehensive Education in Islam," changes the horizon from that of the state to that of the believer. This directs attention to one's comprehensive formation as a person simultaneously to realize both one's

own unique individuality and one's proper relation "with his creator, society and other visible and invisible creatures."

In Chapter XX, "Moral Philosophy of Islamic Mysticism: A Cursory View of the Ethical Teachings of Futuwwa," by Yanis Eshots develops this into a theory of ethical education in terms of Futuwwa or youth as a station through which all must pass on the way to God. Faithfulness to God makes one faithful to people, which is the basis of human solidarity and thereby of a personal and social ethics.

Chapter XXI by Andrey Smirnov, "**Dualism and Monism: How Really Different Are the Two Versions of Sufi Ethics?**" carries this to the higher stage of Sufism by comparing briefly the thought of Rumi and Ibn Arabi. The former clearly counterpoises good and evil; hence the human goal is to stay as far away from evil as possible. In contrast, H.-G. Moeller in Chapter IV might be drawn more to Ibn Arabi for whom good and evil are indissociable even in divine decrees. This has implications for tolerance in our day, for if reality is one then no religion can be wrong and all worship the true God. Thus to attempt to make some persons abandon their "wrong" faith is to prevent them from worshipping God.

Chapter XXII by T. K. Ibrahim, "The Koran on Spiritual Pluralism," reviews the cohesive elements in Islam based on the universality of divine guidance and the substantial identity of the prophetic mission. While laws may differ, faith is one. Hence, peace is the natural norm for the coexistence of nations and confessions. Intercultural dialogues should then be positive and constructive leading to the deeper mutual understanding indispensable for a global age.

In sum, in all the chapters of this part one finds a restatement -- replete with significance for our global times -- of the recognition of divine unity as the point of unity of peoples and the foundation of the sense of good over evil. With Ibn Arabi, this challenges the political and military practice which would see order as the power of a hegemon ruthlessly applied.

In sum, the volume constitutes a major effort at the development of an ethics for our newly global age. It begins with the recognition of the need for the development of ethics in order for it to be able to respond to the new circumstances of our age. Yet it does not consider that such an ethics is able to be generated on the moment, especially through a process of high abstraction which omits the differences in a search for what is the same across cultures. Rather it sees that it must reconcile two elements. On the one hand, due to a new sense of diversity, it is necessary to recognize the uniqueness of the full range of peoples. On the other hand, there is need for a unity which will enable peoples in, and even via, their diversity to communicate and act cooperatively one with another. This will require whole new avenues of philosophical exploration.

Understanding that such a vision as not yet available in philosophy, the work proceeds to investigate the many cultural and philosophical traditions for the contribution each can make in its own terms. The result is an

important bench mark for philosophy on its response to the major challenge of our newly global millennium, namely, that of diversity in unity. To fail in this will constitute a human disaster.

George F. McLean

Part I

A Global Ethics

Chapter I

Is a Global Ethic Possible?

Karsten J. Struhl

In the last decade, there have been a number of interesting attempts to formulate a global ethic. These attempts were initiated by ecumenical religious leaders, but have subsequently made their way into more general secular discourse, especially within the orbit of the United Nations. The focus of this paper is to ask whether there can be a global ethic in a multi-cultural world. In order to clarify the problem, I must begin with some historical background concerning the global ethic project.

In September 1993, representatives of one hundred and twenty of the world's religions assembled in Chicago to convene a Parliament of the World's Religions. This marked the 100th anniversary of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions which had initiated a world wide religious dialogue. The task in the 1993 Parliament was to discuss a draft of a global ethic written by Hans Küng, a well respected ecumenical German theologian. Six thousand participants discussed this draft and amended it. The final draft, entitled "Declaration toward a Global Ethic," began with an introduction written by an editorial committee which declared that "the world is in agony" as a result of the absence of peace, the assault on the Earth's ecosystems, economic disparities and poverty, the violent death of children, and the "aggression and hatred in the name of religion." The Introduction then declared that the basis for a global ethic that could remedy these problems already exists, because there is within the religions of the world a "common core set of values." Following this Introduction is the main document which discusses four "Principles of a Global Ethic." The first principle is that a global ethic is essential for a new global order. Such an ethic, the document continues "can be affirmed by all persons of ethical convictions, whether religiously grounded or not." In short, a global ethic would formulate consensus on a core set of values which all religions and, indeed, all persons of reasonable ethical sensibilities could affirm.

The Declaration then begins to describe this consensus in its second principle, which is that "every human being must be treated humanely." This principle, the Declaration asserts, can be derived from a fundamental ethical norm which can be found in all the world's religions and ethical systems, an ethical norm known as the Golden Rule which the Declaration formulates as follows: "What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do to others... What you wish done to yourself, do to others."

The third principle of the Declaration highlights four more specific ethical guidelines which, it claims, follow from the basic principle that every human being be treated humanely (and the golden rule), and which can be found in most of the religions of the world. These are: (1) a "commitment

to a culture of non-violence and respect for life,” which includes a concern not just for humans but also for non-human animals and plants; (2) a “commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order,” which would oppose “totalitarian state socialism” and “unbridled capitalism” and would recognize that peace is not possible without justice; (3) “commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness,” which present a challenge to the lies of politicians and business people, to the misinformation and ideological propaganda of mass media, to scientists who allow themselves to be tools of political or economic interests, and to representatives of religion who preach intolerance of other religions; and (4) a “commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women” which would oppose sexual discrimination and exploitation. Together, the Declaration declares, these four guidelines, if taken seriously, should be able to transform the world, which leads to the fourth principle.

The fourth principle of the Declaration states that ethical guidelines by themselves are insufficient and that they can only become a social reality through a transformation of consciousness. Such a transformation, the Declaration declares, is already underway. Without this transformation and the global ethic which would guide it, we cannot solve the global crises which threaten our very existence as a species.

In the same year that the Parliament of the World’s Religions discussed Kūng’s draft, Leonard Swidler, a colleague of Kūng who is at the Department of Religion at Temple University in Philadelphia, wrote his own draft of a global ethic which was subsequently presented to a number of international conferences and then posted on the Internet in the hope of reaching a wider audience and of generating responses. His draft on the Internet has undergone a number of revisions, the last of which was in September 1998. Swidler’s draft, entitled “A Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic,” is preceded by a long discussion entitled “Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic.” In that discussion, Swidler claims that humanity is moving from the “Age of Monologue” to the “Age of Global Dialogue,” a move which involves a major paradigm shift in consciousness. In this age, Swidler argues, there is a special need for a global ethic insofar as any part of humanity could generate economic, nuclear, or environment disaster for the rest. Thus, there is a need to come to a minimal ethical consensus based on dialogue. Following this general discussion, Swidler presents his “Universal Declaration” which takes the Golden Rule as ultimate basis of this consensus insofar as some variant of it can be found in every religion and ethical tradition (in his earlier discussion, Swidler gives an impressive set of examples from many of the world’s religions). He then proceeds to list eight basic principles of a global ethic and ten “middle ethical principles.” Both these sets of principles and especially the middle principals are much more specific than the principles of the Parliament’s Declaration. They also seem more a Western articulation of a general ethic -- e.g., that every person should be “free to exercise and develop every capacity, so long as it does not infringe on the rights of other persons;” the right of “freedom of thought, speech, conscience, and religion or belief;”

that all adults should “have the right to a voice in choosing their leaders and holding them accountable.”

Since these two drafts were written, there have been various attempts to move the project for a global ethic beyond religious circles. In 1995, the World Commission on Culture and Development issued a UNESCO report which called for a Global Ethic that would provide the basis for a change in attitudes, social priorities, and patterns of consumption necessary to secure “a decent and meaningful life” for all human beings throughout the world. In 1996, the Interaction Council, composed of thirty former heads of state, urged that a global ethics be developed to meet the problems of the twenty first century. In 1997, UNESCO initiated a “Universal Ethics Project,” which brought together philosophers and theologians representing a variety of ethical traditions in order to develop a universal ethic that would be able to confront such problems as poverty, underdevelopment, environmental deterioration, various forms of intolerance, etc. Such an universal ethic, the document declares, would have a different ontological status than the UN Declaration of Human Rights in that it would provide the philosophical principles from which those rights could be derived.

I think we can expect that there will many more such attempts to discuss and to formulate a global ethic. The question I wish to raise is whether a meaningful global ethic, an ethic which is substantive enough to speak to the global problems that confront us in the twenty first century, is a real possibility in a world in which there is such a plurality of cultures. Can such an ethic become a social reality? I want to suggest some philosophical and practical problems posed by the global ethic project, whether it takes shape in a Parliament of the World’s Religions or within the orbit of the United Nations. I will suggest that we are not likely to achieve a meaningful global ethic through the the forums within which it is now discussed and that, therefore, we need to reconceptualize the project.

THE PROBLEM OF A MINIMAL CONSENSUS

The hope of the various drafts of a global ethic is that it is possible to come to a minimal consensus on ethical norms. It is important to mention at the outset that such a minimal consensus must be more than a very general statement of agreement, for it must be capable of generating norms that can address the problems for which the global ethic is conceived. In other words, this minimal consensus must be capable of constructing a substantive ethic that can address these problems. The various drafts of a global ethic attempt to do this insofar as they attempt to derive certain substantive guidelines or middle range principles from their most general principles. For example, the Parliament’s draft attempts to derive from the general principle that “every human being must be treated humanely” and the Golden Rule four more substantive principles -- a commitment to non-violence, to a just economic order, to a culture of tolerance and truthfulness, and to sexual equality. What I want

to do in this section is discuss the problem of attempting to develop such a minimal consensus.

There are several aspects to this problem. The first is how to decide who participates in the dialogue which attempts to reach such a minimal consensus and how the dialogue is to be conducted. Let us examine this problem first in terms of a consensus among the world's religions. There are, as mentioned above, two major religious drafts. K ung's draft grew out of discussions with a number of representatives of different religions. Swidler's draft drew on his understanding of the world's religions and his ecumenical approach to religion, but seems to be essentially his own proposal. At the actual Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993, K ung's draft underwent only one revision, a change in title. So, it is reasonable to say that both drafts represent predominantly the viewpoint of their respective authors and that at the Parliament the "consensus" generated was the result of what Sallie King has termed a "managerial" process. Swidler has posted his "Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic" on the Internet and invited responses.

The philosopher John Hick responded and suggested that Swidler's draft is essentially a reflection of post-Enlightenment western Christianity and that there needs to be other initial drafts from other cultures and other religions. Otherwise, writes Hick, the project will appear to be a form of western cultural imperialism. "Only then, with the comparison and interaction of these perhaps significantly different drafts, will the movement towards a genuinely global Declaration be able to proceed beyond its initial state."

While I take Hick's suggestion to be a reasonable one, two problems yet remain -- who will be the initiators of the plurality of drafts and who will discuss them in order to reach a minimal consensus. The Parliament's version of the Global Ethic represents at best a consensus among the liberal progressive wing of the world's religions. What about the fundamentalists? Should they also be party to the dialogue. Khalid Duran, who offers a Muslim Perspective in response to Swidler's draft, argues that fundamentalism, which he believes represents a minority position within Islam, will insist that shari'a (Islamic law) be the basis of a global ethic and will "seek to impose their exclusivist vision on others." They may proclaim certain agreement with very general principles of a global ethic drafted by the more progressive wings of the world's religions but will have very different ideas about their implementations. "No one has proclaimed in words so loudly in favor of the emancipation of women as the Mullahcracy in Iran... But what does that mean in practice? Almost the exact opposite... There in the name of the Islamic Republic and its emancipation of women, women are sprayed with acid because a single lock of hair slipped out a little from under the required head covering." Duran suggests, therefore, that the fundamentalists within all the world's religions be excluded from the dialogue, since it is already difficult enough to work out a consensus among those genuinely committed to the principle of religious tolerance and universalism implicit in the project of a global ethic. But if we do this, then we do not have a real consensus among the world's religions, only at best a consensus among their progressive liberal wings. Zolt n Turgyonyi has posed

the problem sharply. Within each religious tradition, we have to ask “who has the right (or duty) to represent the worldview in question... And should we exclude from dialogue heretics? But if we wanted to treat all possible interpretations of a certain religion as equals, in the end we should invite every believer.” And it is highly unlikely that if we did so, we would get a meaningful minimal consensus that could even begin to serve the goals for which the Parliament’s Declaration was drafted.

Furthermore, even if we could somehow get a substantive consensus among all sectors within the world’s religions, we are still left with the problem of how we get a consensus which goes beyond the world’s religions. We cannot simply exclude atheists and there are many people who, while they affiliate themselves with one religion or another, do not derive their ethics from religion as such. Who shall represent these people? It is hardly likely that there is even a consensus among the people within a given culture that can give us anything like the principles suggested by the Declaration. Should we, then, suggest that we use the majority of the culture as a standard or only “progressive” people within the culture?

There is a second aspect of the problem of developing a minimal consensus. Even if we delimit the scope of the participants to liberal progressives within the world’s religious traditions, we can still anticipate that there will be some significant disagreements, and it is by no means clear how these disagreements can be reconciled. Sallie King, in discussing the differences between The Parliament’s draft of a global ethic and Swidler’s draft, has posed the problem sharply. It is, she observes, “scandalous that two versions exist and in a sense are vying against each other, especially when one considers that they both were drafted by white, prosperous, Catholic men who are from the dominant world culture (one German, one American). If these two scholars from closely related backgrounds cannot reconcile their differences and produce a single draft, then how can anyone expect people from other religious, national, and ethnic backgrounds to agree to either proposal.” If, following Hick’s proposal, we allow a plurality of drafts from various representatives of the world’s religions, we can assume that they would be significantly different. On what basis would we decide which elements of these drafts to use as the basis for a minimal consensus. Suppose we appeal to the scriptures of each religion and try to find, within these texts, certain ethical ideas in common, e.g., the Golden Rule. What would follow from this? Even among liberal progressives within a given religion, there is room for different interpretations of the implications of certain ethical norms, and we can certainly expect that the interpretations would vary even more widely between representatives of different religions. The underlying problem is that any interpretation of the ethical norms derived from the religious texts will depend on an ethical judgment. So we are back to square one. How do we come to a consensus when ethical judgments differ? Since different people within the same religion have different ethical evaluations of the implications of any moral norm, it is not even clear that we can come to a consensus within a single religion, let alone a consensus among the world’s religions.

This leads to a third aspect of the problem of developing a minimal consensus. It is somewhat doubtful that we can find a genuine moral consensus among the world's religions if we look at them as a totality. For example, there is a very different understanding of the meaning of violence within Islam and Buddhism. Of course, one can draw from certain passages in Islam a preference for non-violence over violence but, given Islam's affirmation of jihad as an obligation of Muslims (granted there are different interpretations of what this means), it is hard to see how this is compatible with Buddhism's fundamental commitment to ahimsa (non-harm) as a general principle of non-violence. I shall return to this problem in the next section of this paper.

Finally, it is not enough to simply state a minimal consensus, for the minimal ethic is simply a description of what already exists. Since there is already such an ethic in each of the particular religions, what is gained by reiterating that these cultures and religions have it in common? Either they are already acting on the principles of this minimal consensus or they are not. If they are not acting on these principles now, what is gained by pointing to the fact that they have these principles in common? For example, why should a Muslim be more likely to act on certain principles, because s/he knows that Christians too have these principles? At the most, this might help to spread a certain tolerance among the world's religion. But while I expect that the reader of this paper would assume that religious tolerance is a good thing, it would not be sufficient to address the problem of violence and conflict in general. Many significant conflicts are not based on religion and, even when they do have a religious component, the conflict usually has other dimensions, e.g., the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians or the conflict in Northern Ireland. Also, the fact that a minimal ethic promotes tolerance would not in itself be useful to address the other goals of a global ethic -- e.g, economic injustice and ecological crisis. To reiterate the main point I am making here, if there is already in the world's religions and in the world's cultures values that address these concerns, it is not clear how knowing that other cultures or religions share these values will make it more likely that they be acted upon.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE: TREATING EVERY HUMAN BEING HUMANLY AND THE GOLDEN RULE

It is probably true, as both Küng and Swidler have argued, that every religion, and perhaps every ethical tradition, has some version of the Golden Rule in both its negative and positive form. This, as I noted earlier, is taken to be the underlying basis for the general principle formulated by the Parliament of the World's Religions-- that every human being must be treated humanely -- and for the basic principles and "middle principles" which Swidler articulates. However, there are two difficulties with the use of the Golden Rule as the basis for a global ethic. The first was alluded to by G.B. Shaw who said, "Do not do unto others what you would have others do unto you. Others may have different tastes." The call here is for greater specificity. Some people may have different kinds of sexual desires, so that to allow them freedom to

engage in the sexuality which is to one's taste but not to allow them a form of sexual activity which one abhors is a lack of respect for the sexual freedom of other individuals. The rule could be amended by allowing each individual the right to pursue his or her sexual tastes. But this formulation immediately needs more amending, since someone's sexual taste may include rape, sex with children, and other forms of activity which we believe oppressive to another. So, the injunction might become "allow each individual the right to pursue his or her sexual desires so long as they do not harm others." This, however, is a specific liberal formulation of the rule. Many cultures would insist that forms of sexuality which individuals might want and which does not directly harm another is nonetheless a violation of God's commandments, intrinsically unhealthy, or harmful to the community as a whole. Another problem, often acknowledged as a general problem of the principle of liberty, is that the idea of what is harmful has no clear consensus even among intellectuals in the West. Why, for example, is indirect harm to be excluded from the calculation of moral harm?

A further problem arises if we amend G.B. Shaw's statement as follows. "Do not do unto others as you would have other do unto you. Others may have different roles and obligations." Thus, within certain African countries, it is customary for all women of a certain age to be circumcised (which has very different implications for women than it does for men, since it removes the clitoris). Western feminists and perhaps most people in Western countries would consider this oppressive and a violation of fundamental human rights, but the practice is often defended by women within those cultures. Islam prescribes the wearing of a veil for women, and, in some Islamic cultures, wearing the veil has implications which Western feminists find extremely oppressive. The point I am making is that what is often seen in Western cultures as a fundamental violation of the idea of treating everyone humanely and of the Golden Rule is not at all a contradiction to large numbers of people in the cultures within which those practices occur. For those cultures, there is no contradiction between the Golden Rule and female circumcision or the mandatory wearing of the veil and all that it implies, since these demands are put on all women and women are understood as having intrinsically different social obligations.

A second problem arises with respect to the scope of the concern. "Do not do unto others." But which others? The Conquistadors like Columbus, Balboa, and Cortes and members of the clergy who took slavery to be morally legitimate did not see their actions as contradicting the Golden Rule. They simply assumed that the indigenous population in the Americas and slaves from Africa were not fully human and, therefore, did not deserve the same respect as those who were. Or they assumed, with Aristotle, that some humans were less equipped intellectually and morally than others and were, therefore, fit only to be the servants and slaves of their superiors. While most of the world's people now hold slavery to be immoral, racist and colonial/imperialist assumptions still persist among large numbers of people in a variety of cultures, often in overt and aggressive forms. And even where there is an explicit

rejection of racism and colonialism, these assumptions persist more subtly. The suffering of those in other nations and in other cultures and religions is accorded a lesser place than the suffering of those in one's own nation or who belong to one's own religion or cultures. Often this is justified by the assumption that those who belong to other cultures have some trait or traits whose difference justifies us in not granting them equal concern, e.g., "they don't put the same value on human life as we do." These assumptions are often part of certain religious beliefs. For example, many Christians believe that those who are not Christian are not saved. Furthermore, perhaps the majority of the human population in the West excludes non-human animals from the Golden Rule. Even those who are concerned with "animal welfare" often assume that it is legitimate to cause significant suffering to highly sensitive and intelligent non-human animals, so long as that suffering furthers some human purpose. In fact, Swidler's Universal Declaration, while insisting that non-human animals be treated with respect, nonetheless insist that "humans have greater intrinsic value than non-humans," a claim that would certainly be disputed by many adherents of Buddhism and Hinduism. In short, "do unto others" or "do not do unto others" does not tell us which others we should or should not include.

ETHICAL RELATIVISM, ETHICAL ABSOLUTISM, AND MORAL UNIVERSALISM

The basic assumption of ethical relativism is that there are essentially incommensurable frameworks of ethical discourse. Gilbert Harmon has suggested an interesting analogy to make ethical relativism plausible. Consider Einstein's theory of Relativity in which all motion is relative to some spatio-temporal framework and that, therefore, something that moves in relation to one spatio-temporal framework may be at rest in relation to another. In the same way, Harmon argues, moral norms are relative to general moral frameworks. Therefore, what may be right within one moral framework may be wrong within another. For example, those on opposite sides of the ethical divide on such issues as vegetarianism, abortion, and euthanasia may very well agree on all the facts. But they make very different assumptions about the value of non-human life and on the sanctity of human life as such. This points to an underlying difference in a general framework of values. Furthermore, even when there seems to be agreement on certain values, there may be important moral disagreement. Harmon gives as an example the general consensus that murder is wrong. But this doesn't take us very far, as murder is defined as "wrongful killing." That murder is wrong may be perfectly compatible with the idea in some societies that a master can kill his slaves, that a husband can treat his wife in any way he wants, and that infanticide is morally acceptable. To all this, the ethical absolutist might argue that the reason for such moral diversity is that some people are better placed than others, and, therefore, that some ethical judgments are correct while others are incorrect. To this, the ethical relativist replies that just as in Einstein's Relativity theory there is no privileged spatio-temporal framework, so there is no way to judge that

one ethical framework is superior to another. From this it follows that there is no such thing as being better placed to know the moral truth. One's moral judgment is always relative to some ethical framework, and there is no way to privilege any ethical framework above another.

Let me now state the problem in terms of the attempt to formulate a global ethic. It is generally asserted that a global ethic requires the claim of ethical absolutism? The Declaration of the Chicago Parliament states, "We affirm that there is an irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life." Thus, the idea of a global ethic, which assume that there can be a significant minimal consensus of moral norms, must assume that there are certain absolute ethical norms within different ethical frameworks. But the problem is that even if that were so, the meaning of this minimal consensus would be different within the different frameworks. Consider again how the same ethical norm functions within different religious frameworks. Within at least certain interpretations of Islam, the idea that women and men are equal in the eyes of God is not, as I have suggested in the previous section, incompatible with the idea that men and women need to have different spheres and that women have special obligations which men do not. Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity might agree in general that violence as such is bad. But their understanding of what violence is ethically permissible will differ, because their general ethical frameworks are different. In other words, while people within different religious or cultural traditions might appear to come to a consensus on certain ethical claims, their interpretation of those claims might well be different, because the meaning of those ethical claims is imbedded within a larger ethical and/or religious framework.

Is there a way out of this problem? I have said above that it is generally assumed that a global ethic presupposes ethical absolutism, which is to say that it presupposes that the norms of its minimal consensus has an unconditional validity. This certainly seems to be the case if we derive these norms from a religious foundation. However, there are alternative ways of deriving universal norms. We might, for example, attempt to derive certain universal norms from human nature, specifically, from needs which all human beings have in common. This view, sometimes referred to as "ethical naturalism," has a long philosophical lineage from Aristotle to thinkers like Spinoza, Marx, John Dewey, and Eric Fromm. On this view, moral values are tools which enable us to fulfill our common needs, and if the latter can be objectively ascertained, so too can the former. One problem with this point of view, however, is that while we have certain basic "survival needs" like the need for food, sex, social support, and recognition, even these needs are organized and manifested within a specific social and historical context. In other words, our needs are "socially patterned." This has vast implications for the idea of human nature and for ethical naturalism. If our needs are socially patterned, then there is no core transhistorical human nature to which we can appeal. Human nature is social and historical through and through. From this it follows, that the attempt to derive moral values from human needs must be historically and socially situated.

However, even if our needs are historically developed, it might still be possible to develop a global ethic. Perhaps it is the case that there are certain norms which are valid for our historical epoch. For example, it may well be that the norm of free speech can be demonstrated to be a universally valid norm in an age of global communication, but that it did not have such a validity in earlier historical periods. Whether or not this specific example is correct, my general claim is that while human needs change historically and, therefore, the validity of certain moral norms would also change historically, there is still the possibility of objectively determining certain universal norms in a particular historical epoch. Universal norms, then, are not necessarily absolute norms. Thus, a global ethic need not rest on ethical absolutism. In other words, it is possible to derive a global ethic from the historical development of our common human needs at this historical juncture.

However, this is not the end of the story, for a global ethic must, on this account, presuppose the possibility of a moral universalism, if not an ethical absolutism. Is a moral universalism based on the assumption of universal human needs that have been historically developed able to survive the ethical relativist critique? There are three difficulties. The first is that while a moral universalism may allow for historical relativism, it is not clear how it can solve the general problem of moral claims being bound to general ethical frameworks. Different cultures and religions within the same historical epoch still have different ethical frameworks. The value placed on those needs may be different depending on the general ethical framework of that culture. Furthermore, the ethical framework may be different with respect to the question of universality. There are some cultures, or at least elements within certain cultures which eschew the very value of universalism or, at the other extreme, which insist that only the moral norms derived from religious revelation, as they understand it, have universal validity. Second, there may be groups within a given culture or within the world at large whose needs are inherently antagonistic to one another. One hardly has to be a Marxist to recognize that the needs of corporations and those who work for them are generally opposed. Similarly, the needs of international economic agencies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization may be antagonistic to the needs of many people in the less developed world. Finally, even if there are certain indisputable common human needs, we can derive certain universal norms from them only if we make the added assumption that our moral community is wider than our specific national or religious culture. In other words, unless we care about the needs of those beyond our culture we cannot deduce universal norms.

This last problem can be illustrated by a talk which Richard Rorty presented at the Second UNESCO Philosophy Forum in 1996. Rorty argues that universalism presupposes that all human beings should be part of a common moral community. One problem with that assumption is that the possibility of forming such a community rests on the assumption that there can be a vast redistribution of wealth. This is because if “you cannot render assistance to people in need, your claim that they form a part of your moral community

is empty.” In other words, it makes no sense to talk about a global community unless we can genuinely come to the assistance of those who are in need in that community. But what if we cannot? What if those in the advanced industrial countries cannot redistribute wealth “in ways which create bright prospects for the children of the underdeveloped countries without destroying the prospects of their own children in our own societies.” If this is so, and Rorty thinks that it might very well be so, then the “rich parts of the world may be in the position of somebody proposing to share her one loaf of bread with a hundred starving people.” Rorty suggests that the problem may be analogous to the problem of triage. Just as doctors and nurses may have to decide which victims can be given aid and which cannot, so those of us in the advanced industrial countries may have to decide that we cannot afford to render significant assistance to the impoverished masses in the underdeveloped world if we are to sustain a reasonable quality of life for ourselves and for our children. If this is the case, then they cannot be considered part of our moral community, just as those who doctors decide not to save can no longer be considered members of their moral community. And if they are not a part of our moral community, there can be no universal ethic. To restate the conclusion in the terms of ethical naturalism, if there is not a willingness to concern ourselves with the needs of all the people in the world, then we cannot derive a universal ethic from universal needs. The question of a global ethics has now become a question of political economics, of resources, and of care.

COMPASSION AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF A GLOBAL ETHICS

I think one of Rorty’s assumptions is right -- that if we cannot care about people throughout the world, then it is meaningless to say that they are part of our global community. To what extent, then, does our ability to genuinely care for those outside our country or our culture rest on our global political economy and the existing resources? I raise the question this way to suggest that there are three variables -- political economy, resources, and caring -- and that while they are interdependent, their relation is more complex than Rorty would have it.

The problem of resources is partly a problem of what can be sustained by our planet, and it is highly likely that our planet cannot sustain the extension of the standard of living of, say, the American upper middle class to the world in general. It has been suggested that it would require five earths to enable the world’s population to consume the amount of energy per-capita that is consumed in Los Angeles, California. Whether or not this estimate is correct, it is surely true that affluence as people conceive it in America is beyond the resource capacity of our planet. Paul Wachtel, an American psychotherapist and ecological theorist, puts it this way:

to imagine a billion Chinese using resources and polluting the air and water at the rate we do, and in addition 700 mil-

lion Indians, 400 million Latin Americans, and 500 million Africans, and numerous other people as well, is to recognize that our present notions of what constitutes the good life absolutely require that most of the world be poor. Only by changing the way we use resources and define our needs is there even a chance for all the world's billions to prosper."

This might seem to support Rorty's position. However, Wachtel's analysis points in another direction. The focus of his work is on the way in which American affluence has created psychological impoverishment. Industrial growth has not made Americans happier than they were previously. Americans have made a Faustian bargain. Their obsession with economic growth, he argues, has confused quantity of goods with the quality of life. To take one example, the automobile which has become the symbol of American freedom and spontaneity means that people spend hours on crowded highways going to work and breathing air that literally kills them and their children, not to mention that the number of automobile accidents in a year far exceeds the casualties in many wars. Overall, Wachtel notes that the American middle class life style leads them to treat themselves as machines who must work longer hours to get the things that advertising tells them they must want, causing a variety of stress related diseases. It is vicious cycle, which Wachtel compares with the cycle of neurosis, in which hyperindividualism and the obsession with material things erodes community ties which creates a need for even more material goods to fill the vacuum. The result is the ideology of economic growth and consumption which stimulates demands that further undermine community connections which causes a sense of insecurity, which in turn leads to the further need for economic growth and consumption. I cannot in this paper do justice to Wachtel's brilliant analysis of the American psyche. The point I want to draw from Wachtel's analysis is that the attempt by those in the advanced industrial countries to maintain their present life style at the expense of much of the world may, in fact, be to the psychological (and physical) detriment of themselves and their children.

There is another psychological problem as well, which has been elaborated at great length within Buddhism and is also beginning to be discussed in contemporary Western psychological literature. To shut off our capacity for compassion, our capacity to care about others, is to diminish our own capacity for feeling and joy. Even when triage in a medical setting is absolutely necessary, it must take a severe toll on the emotional life of the medical personnel who have to participate in it. And when those of us who come from the advanced industrial world shut our hearts to the suffering of others -- to the poor and homeless in our own country as well as the billions of people of the world who do not have enough to feed their families or obtain even the minimum medical care -- we impoverish our emotional selves. In other words, there is a point at which self-interest and altruism meet and that point is compassion.

Humanity is not facing anything like the situation of having one loaf of bread for 100 starving people. We certainly have enough resources and

productive ability to provide food, shelter, clothing, and decent medical care for every person on the planet. There is nothing about the resources of the planet alone that condemns so much of the world's population to poverty and a dehumanized life. What condemns so many people to disabling poverty is the way these resources are used, the choice of energy, and the distribution of wealth. In other words, the problem is not the lack of resources, but our global political economy. To put this in terms of Rorty's analogy, we can grow enough grain to make the amount of bread sufficient to feed all of humanity. The problem is that we are putting too much of our productive energies and resources into the baking of luxurious cakes which are being consumed by only a small part of the planet; and moreover, the cakes have so much sugar and fat that they are unhealthy for those who consume them.

This leads to the discussion of the third variable -- political economy. We live in what is often described as the age of globalization. On the surface, this means that we live in a world which is increasingly integrated on the economic, technological, and political levels. We take for granted what only two decades ago was barely imagined -- the Internet. We live in a world where a highly integrated global communications system seems capable of reaching every corner of the planet almost simultaneously. My wife's parents, who live in Moscow, learned about the attack on the World Trade Center before she did, even though she was at the time in an office in Manhattan less than two miles away.

However, at the deeper level, globalization is a conjunction of two processes. As Peter Marcuse puts it, what might be called "really existing globalization" combines "developments in technology and developments in the concentration of power," specifically economic power. Globalization, then, is specifically corporate capitalist globalization. It is globalization from above. What is called globalization, then, is a particular organization of the world in which global corporations and other transnational economic agents -- e.g., the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization -- organize production on an international scale, determine the forms of technology and energy, and control the division of labor and the distribution of goods. These same transnational agents have near monopoly control over the global communications industry and undermine the capacity of many nation states to attend to the needs and interests of their own citizens; hence, they undermine whatever democratic forms those nations may have. They also encourage environmental degradation, as poorer countries need to lower or abolish their environmental protections in order to receive money from financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund. It should be no surprise that these transnational economic agents have as their priority not the welfare of the world's people but the maximization of corporate profit. The result is that the economic problems that the proponents of a global ethic wish to confront have become worse, and the gap between wealth and poverty is increasing internationally as well as within nations. For example, 80 countries, according to a 1999 UN report, have per capita incomes which are lower than they were a decade ago. Some 1.2 billion people live below the absolute

poverty line. Over two billion earn less than two dollars a day. Almost one billion people are unemployed. “Four hundred and forty seven billionaires have wealth greater than the income of the poorest half of humanity... The assets of the three richest people were more than the combined GNP of the 48 least developed countries.” In all, while there are a number of potential benefits to the technological, economic, and political integration of the world, the “really existing globalization” is not likely to alleviate the economic, ecological, and social problems which a global ethic would address.

It is often said that there is no alternative to globalization and, in one sense of the term, this might well be true, since, unless humanity destroys itself, we can expect an increasing integration of economic and technological organization as well as the growth of a global communications system. Let us remember, however, that globalization, on the deeper level is not only the integration of economic and technological organization, but the control of this organization by corporate and financial capital. It might, then, be possible to break the link between the present economic organization and technological development. In other words, it might be possible to envision a form of globalization which is not globalization from above. In fact, globalization from above is already being challenged by a growing international movement which is sometimes misnamed the “anti-globalization” movement but which I think it is more appropriate to call the movement of “globalization from below.” Its goal is not to destroy the global integration of technological development and communications systems but to create a different global culture, one which is not run by an international corporate elite, one in which the global institutions which dominate economic and political life are democratically accountable.

At the moment, they are a diverse group of ecologically concerned citizens, consumer advocates, indigenous peoples who protest the exploitation of their tribal lands, landless peasants from the less developed world, rank and file workers protesting such international trade agreements as NAFTA and the WTO and who are demanding that certain labor rights be part of these national trade agreements, third world groups who oppose the structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, groups in opposition to global sweatshops, advocates of small farmers opposing the trade agreements which favor agribusiness, human rights groups and other NGOs, etc. These groups are not only diverse in terms of specific issues but often are ideologically diverse. They are often more anarchist than Marxist. They include radical feminists and a variety of liberals. At the Social Forum at Porto Alegre, Brazil in February of 2002, which was attended by 70,000 participants from 150 countries, there was a sharp division between reformers whose main goal was to lobby and negotiate with international financial institutions and trade organizations and those who were interested in creating new organizations of popular power.

Nevertheless, while it is indeed a diverse movement, there is an emerging convergence between them. However different they may be ideologically and in terms of their specific social priorities, they “share an opposition to transnational corporations and to the neoliberal government policies

which enable them to flourish.” It is indeed a diverse movement, but it has made itself felt collectively in Seattle (which had over 50,000 protesters), in Genoa, Italy, in Prague, in Washington D.C., in New York City, and, as mentioned above, at Porto Alegre, Brazil. It also comes together over particular issues -- e.g., putting international pressure on pharmaceutical companies which profiteer through high prices on AIDS drugs in Africa and challenging the United States government when it attempted to sanction South Africa for ignoring patent laws with regard to these drugs. Especially important for thinking about the possibility of a global ethic, there is beginning to be a convergence among these diverse groups on common values and norms arising out of their networking with one another.

The name of one of the largest coalition groups representing this movement is “Another World is Possible.” It is too early yet to know, but this may be the embryo of a new kind of revolutionary movement, a revolutionary movement not for socialism in one country, not for the victory for a class, but for a new global order, a revolutionary movement which is motivated by compassion and by a new vision of how the world could be organized from below, which is motivated by a vision of a global community which is attentive to the ecological requirements of the planet, which does not put corporate greed over the quality of human life, and which has a vision of a global democracy which is really accountable to the citizens of the world.

CONCLUSION: GLOBAL ETHICS AND GLOBAL STRUGGLE

It is time now for me to make my own position on global ethics clear. For reasons that I have indicated above, I do not think that it is possible to have a minimal consensus among the world’s cultures that will have substantive implications. I do not think that it is possible to construct a meaningful global ethic that will really speak to the international problems that we confront simply through dialogue between representatives of the world’s religions, through dialogue within philosophical and social scientific think tanks, or through dialogue at UN conferences. By this I do not mean to demean these attempts, for they may have useful political and international functions just as the UN Declaration of Human Rights has useful political and international functions. However, for the reasons I have indicated above, I do not think that we can construct a global ethic through dialogue alone.

The possibility of a global ethic depends on a new world order, one in which there really is a commonality of needs among the world’s citizens, one in which there is an authentic global culture which can generate a global ethical framework. It is only within this framework that a minimal consensus on ethical norms could be developed. Only this can provide the answer to the problems posed by ethical relativism and by Rorty’s attack on universalism. There might still be a variety of ethical frameworks, but there would be an overarching common culture within which an ethical core with substantive implications could be extracted. With a genuine global culture, the problem of antagonistic needs of different groups and different peoples would be, if not

entirely eliminated, at least minimized. With a genuine global culture, there would be the possibility of a universal ethic based on the assumption that all of humanity is part of a unified global community. Our community would be the world. And if such a global culture was ecologically oriented and based on deep compassion, I believe that our community would include more than just humanity. An ecologically based compassion would allow for the inclusion of non-human life as part of our global community.

All well and good, you might say, but we do not have such a community at present and perhaps we never will. So, let me state my conclusion for the present moment. A global ethic at this juncture in history is possible only as a heuristic, but it is a heuristic which is already taking form in the visions and spirit of those engaged in the struggle for globalization from below. In other words, the possibility of a global ethic depends on the willingness of people to struggle for another world order. They must believe that another world is possible, and only if another world is possible can there be a genuine global ethic. However, in believing it and struggling to make it a reality, their visions can begin to converge and they can begin to construct a new ethical vision, a vision which we can call a global ethic in the making. And as the struggle continues, it may be joined by those who meet in the Parliaments of the World's Religions, by important elements of the philosophical and scientific community, and by those who attend UN sponsored conferences. In this sense, insofar as they join the struggle for a new world order, they too may be part of this global ethic in the making, and dialogue may have a role to play in the construction of a global ethic.

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NOTES

1. The full text of the final draft can be found in Hans Küng, ed., *Yes to a Global Ethic* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co, 1966). This book also has comments on the Parliament's Declaration from a variety of internationally known persons -- Lev Kopelev, Rigoberto Menchu, Patriarch Bartholomew I, Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talil, Yehudi Menuhin, Elie Wiesel, Desmond Tutu, Aung San Suu Kyi, etc.

2. They can both be found on the Internet. On-line posting, <http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/Center/intro.htm>.

3. This report, entitled "A New Global Ethics," can be found on the Internet. On-line posting, http://kvc.minbuza.nl/uk/archive/report/chapter1_3.html.

4. The Discussion of "The Universal Ethics Project" can be found on the Internet. On-line posting, <http://www.unesco.org/opi2/philosophy and ethics/pronpro.htm>.

5. Sallie King, "A Global Ethic in the Light of Comparative Religious Ethics," in *Explorations in Global Ethics*, edited by Sumner B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 126-27.

6. John Hick, "Towards a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic: a Christian Comment." On-line posting, <http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/Center/hick.htm>

7. On-line posting, <http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/Center/duran.htm>

8. Zoltán Turgonyi, "Universalism, Relativism, and the Possibilities of a Global Ethic." This paper was delivered at the conference entitled *The Age of Global Dialogue*, held in Budapest in 1997, organized by the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. On-line posting, www.philinst.hu/intezet/tz01_p.htm.

9. Sallie King, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

10. I am indebted to Zoltán Turgonyi for this argument. *Op. cit.*

11. In 1610, a Catholic priest in America wrote to the Church in Europe to ask whether slavery was in accord with Catholic doctrine. He received the following reply from a Brother Luis Brandon. "Your Reverence writes me that you would like to know whether the Negroes who are sent to your parts are legally captured. To this I reply that your Reverence should have no scruples on this point, because this is a matter which has been questioned by the Board of Conscience in Lisbon, and all its members are learned and conscientious men. Nor did the Bishops who were in Sao Thome, Cape Verde, and here in Lando -- all learned and virtuous men -- find fault in it... Therefore we and the Fathers of Brazil buy these slaves for our service without any scruple..." Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Collins), p. 29.

12. Gilbert Harmon and Judith Jarvis Thomson, *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996). This is a debate between these two philosophers in which Part I on "Moral Relativism" was written by Gilbert Harmon and Part II by Judith Jarvis Thomson.

13. I am indebted for this term and to much of the analysis which follows to Milton Fisk, *Ethics and Society: A Marxist Interpretation of Value* (New York University press, 1980).

14. On-line posting, www.unesco.org/phiweb/uk/2rpu/rort/rort.html

15. Douglas Lummis, *Radical Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 69.

16. Paul L. Wachtel, *The Poverty of Affluence* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1989), p. 28.

17. Peter Marcuse, "The Language of Globalization," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 52, #3 (July/August 2000), p. 24.

18. The effects of globalization on nation states have been described as follows: "Capital mobility undermined the power of national governments to pursue full employment policies or regulate corporations. International organizations and agreements increasingly restricted environmental and social protections. Neoliberal ideology reshaped beliefs about what government

should do and what it is able to accomplish.” Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *Globalization from Below: the Power of Solidarity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 2000), p. 3.

19. *Ibid.*, p.7. Most of the statistics mentioned are from this work (*Globalization from Below*).

20. The Social Forum was conceived as an alternative to the World Economic Forum which was meeting at the same time in New York City. For further discussion of this historic forum, see James Petras, “Porto Alegre 2002,” *Monthly Review*, Vol. 53, #11 (April, 2002), pp. 56-61.

21. Barbara Epstein, “Anarchism and Anti-Globalization,” *Monthly Review*, Vol. 53, #4 (September, 2001), p. 10. Epstein’s article is an excellent overview of the ideological tendencies within the movement and especially of its anarchist tendencies.

22. See Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-29. They discuss this case and several others where what they call a “Lilliput strategy” (after the Lilliputians in Jonathan Swift) has been quite successful on an international level in opposing corporate power and the governments which assist it.

Chapter II

Is Absolute Morality Possible in Modern Pluralistic Society?

Abdussalam A. Guseinov

The attitude to moral absolutism has been a pivotal factor in the European post-Kantian ethics during the last two centuries. The range of positions on this matter varies from radical negation of moral absolutism in diverse avant-gardist philosophical schools (the most conspicuous in this respect being Marxism, Nietzscheanism, and pragmatism) to its respectable academic justification attended by the moderation of Kantian rigorism. This is attained in some cases by evaluating morality within a cultural context (e.g., in Heinrich Rickert's Neo-Kantianism), presenting it as a theological outlook in other cases (e.g., in Max Scheller's phenomenology and Russian religious philosophy), or reducing it to communicative rationality (as in the ethical discourse of Carl Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas). The opposition of absolutism and naturalism (in a broad sense, including also the historical-sociological theories of morals), Kantianism and anti-Kantianism, still proves to be a watershed of philosophical-ethical discussions both in the West and Russia. Currently, it has become much more pressing in view of a new stage in the general civilization process known as "globalization".

Globalization is a subject too intricate to be tackled in brief. I would like to draw attention to just one obvious circumstance. Human actions in those vital aspects which are determined by a level of technological progress make up a unified system embracing the entire human community. But as far as these actions depend on an individual choice of values, ethical and cultural identity, humankind is still dissociated and split in its civilization. To remove this contradiction, three competing scenarios are offered: the first one is oriented to the predominance of values inherent in West-European culture; the second approach is based on an equitable dialogue of all cultures; and the third scenario is directed toward an intercultural synthesis. These three scenarios are all common in their direct or indirect reliance on the idea of absolute morality. In the first case, it is most noticeable: by giving priority to one system of values over the others, it implies that this system is preferable by a certain absolute criterion or because it incarnates this criterion. But a dialogue between the varying systems of values is possible only under the assumption that these systems of values regard themselves to be all equal before a certain absolute moral law or each of them identifies itself with such law, and in this case an intercultural dialogue looks like a certain community of absolutes similar to a summit meeting at the UN General Assembly. As for the proposed synthesis of cultures, it is also linked with the concept of universal human values.

These general considerations prompt me to deliver this report on the possibilities of absolute morality in modern pluralistic society.

THREE OBJECTIONS TO AN ABSOLUTE MORALITY

There are three such objections.

First, absolute morality cannot be explicated, for this would presume the existence of an absolute subject. According to the well-known paradox of perfection, a saint regarding himself as such is far from being an angel. Therefore, even if we assumed the existence of an unconditional law, this would bring up the question: who would define its content and who could justify and validate its exercise?

Second, like all absolute concepts, absolute morality is doomed to remain in the intelligible world and even there, according to Wittgenstein, it is beyond the bounds of linguistic formulation. At any rate, it cannot be embodied in adequate actions since any human action is always associated with a concrete individual and concrete circumstances, representing not only a single but also a unique case. No matter how important are its general underlying grounds, more important are the private circumstances making it singular. A moral person, not satisfied with the desire to be moral, acts so as to reveal this desire. It is not enough for such a person to know about the existence of human duty in general, or one's duty to humanity, this person should be able to define what is his/her duty, in particular, what place he/she occupies in regard to those concrete persons closely associated with her/him. Devoid of actions, absolute morality appears to be abstract, lifeless and senseless.

Third, since absolute morality has no adequate forms for its manifestation, real forms in which it "reveals" itself always prove to be inadequate. Marxist sociology treats appeals to absolute morality, practised in ordinary consciousness, as a mode for concealing the will of the ruling class; Nietzschean psychology, as an impotent ill will of the weak; while analytical epistemology sees it as nonverifiable and, therefore, as irresponsible. This criticism can hardly be discarded as too far-fetched. To this reasoning can be added another sound argument. As seen from the analysis of actual situations and contexts of social life giving rise to the idea of absolute morality, it invariably emerges as an essential component in interpersonal relations when the latter acquire the character of an irreconcilable conflict. The general rule applied in this case is as follows: prior to, and in order to, destroy an opponent or overpower him with one's will, he has to be declared an enemy and discredited from the position of absolute values. Today, as in the past, the lines of military conflicts drawn by supreme headquarters strikingly coincide with the lines dividing the human souls, which were drawn by religions and endorsed by philosophers. On this point, it seems relevant to share one personal experience. About seven years ago I visited Jerusalem and was astonished to see that there were no external obstacles and demarcation lines between the Jewish and Arab sections in this city but, nonetheless, they were detached from each other by a wide gulf of mutual human rejection. Involuntarily, I remembered

Berlin, another city divided into two parts by a huge wall but, nevertheless, going on to live on the awareness of its unity. Then, for the first time, I had quite an unnerving experience and a psychological shock in facing the truth of an essential, albeit the long-established idea: the invisible walls erected in the human minds are far stronger and more ominous than the visible walls made of stone and founded on cement.

These three principal and, admittedly, strong arguments are generally presented against the idea of absolute morality and repeatedly exploited in philosophical teachings directed against it. The following will be an attempt to confute these arguments by showing how it is possible to rebut the objections against the idea of absolute morality without refuting the idea itself. I will proceed primarily from Kant's teaching on absolute morality as the most consistent theory of all.

ABSOLUTE MORALITY AS SELF-OBLIGATION

The idea of absolute morality is linked with a special function of moral motives in human behavior. Moral motives are not ranked on a par with pragmatic considerations (motives of common sense) based on the individual's natural wants, his social status, life circumstances, etc. Moral motives belong to a secondary level, stay behind them or over them and are regarded as a kind of supermotives. In human behavior they occupy the same place as the Olympian gods in the conduct of Homer's heroes. Pragmatic considerations are quite self-sufficient to understand why a person commits a certain act; or to put it differently, all human actions are pragmatically motivated. In this sense, moral motives may seem to be superfluous.

The function of moral motives can be more concretized by comparing it to the quality control department in production. As this department checks the compliance of finished goods with their generally accepted technical specifications, morality exercises its summing-up control over all other motives to establish whether the latter, along with their pragmatic strength, can also be regarded as morally deserving (good, just, etc.). All other considerations are always attended by moral motives (complementing, amplifying, or covering the former). Among other things, this is evidenced by an inherent characteristic of human psychology according to which the human individuals in their conscious intentions and self-appraisal are invariably oriented to goodness. Socrates was right in his assertion that intentional evil is inconceivable, for no one can act badly of his own free will. Even the most desperate criminal strives to pass his evil for good. In those rare cases when a person viewing the world with open eyes acknowledges committing a wicked deed he finds consolation in thinking that it involves a *minor* evil. Hence, subjectively, the individual always collates his actions with the absolute idea of good.

This brings up the following question: how does the moral control "department" operate in the individual evaluating all other motives ready to take the form of a decision before committing an act? It cannot but proceed in the form of an ideal (mental) experiment, for the matter involves expert

examination of concrete motives at the stage of decision-making, i.e., prior to the realization of concrete actions. The actualization of this experiment in real life would be tantamount to committing relevant acts without moral expert examination comparable to the smuggling of finished goods to the market bypassing the QCD.

Kant provides us with excellent and well-thought-out examples of mental experiments, two of which are most significant. The first one, designed to test the maxim of will for its universality, concerns a tradesman facing a dilemma whether he should take money on deposit promising to repay it in time, although he is well aware that he wouldn't be able to do so. In this case, the chief point is whether it is ethical to give false promises. To answer this question, the Kantian tradesman must ask himself whether the false promise he is forced to make for pragmatic considerations can become a universal law. Speaking generally, what is to happen if everyone would give empty promises having decided that promises must be false? In this case, no one would believe in any promises, and hence, he would not be believed, either. Therefore, the maxim of will understood as a general idea (elevated to a universal law) negates itself, it fails to stand the moral test. The second example sets a model of mental experiment designed to appraise whether a given action may be considered as one performed from a moral duty. To this end, a person has to deduct all pragmatic considerations from his motivation of the suggested action and answer the question placed before himself: would he act so if he did not pursue some personal interests in this action? Thus, a merchant conducting his business honestly and at a profit should ask himself whether he would continue to do business honestly if he had to run it at a loss. The positive answer would also involve the motive of duty. The essence of such mental experiment lies in devising an ideal situation wherein duty as a motive of action is opposed to one's inclinations.

The ideal experiment as a form of motivated actions was discovered long before Kant. It is inherent in moral consciousness itself, in particular, in the most universal and transcultural moral command - the golden rule of ethical conduct. In the Gospels, the golden rule is formulated as follows: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." This rule prescribes that an individual should follow such rules which he would himself formulate as laws of ethical conduct if he were assigned to do so. The valid criterion to be applied to such rules is the individual's readiness to obey these rules himself. The essence of this experiment lies in that the individual, before he starts to actually impose a certain rule on others mentally tests its action on himself. This is attained by mentally reversing the situation as a result of which the doer and the one against whom the action is directed change their places. The rule may be considered as ethical only if it bears a supercharge of the golden rule.

The ideal (mental) experimentation as a specific functional form of morality in the motivation of human behavior predetermines a peculiar kind of its language sustained in subjunctive modality. Of exceptional importance is the viewpoint on this matter expressed by George Moore in his *Principia*

Ethica: “We use the same words, when we assert an ethical proposition about a subject that is actually real, and when we assert it about a subject considered as merely possible. In this ambiguity of language we have, then, a possible source of error with regard to the bearing of truths that assert reality upon truths that assert goodness.”¹ Moral evaluation is an ideal procedure for appraising not the reality but a possibility, not real but probable motives for performing a deed. A moral judgment involves the evaluation of something that may occur in the ideal realm, which can be adequately expressed by linguistic means only in subjunctive modality. A moral judgment is structured so as to define something (any concrete motive of behavior) that could occur in the ideal realm. In colloquial language, moral judgments are often formulated in the indicative mood (why it should be so is a subject of separate study), but nonetheless there are vivid examples of their adequate definition in the form of subjunctive modality, the most characteristic of them being the aforementioned golden rule of morality.

Addressing the individual inclined to ponder over the morality of his future actions, the golden rule prescribes that he must answer the other question: would he have others do the same to him, i.e., to appraise this action as possible in the ideal world. It should be noticed that Kant’s ethical language also abounds in the subjunctive mood, his famous “as if” (*als ob*). Subjunctive modality is an essential element of the categorical imperative: “Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.” In the given case, “canst will” obviously means “would wish”. It is no accident that Kant further on specifies: “Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature.” Then follows the clarification unequivocally testifying that the matter involves an ideal mentally conceived belonging of oneself to an intelligible world and the realm of goals, which makes categorical imperatives possible and renders any individual a member of this intelligible world, “in consequence of which, if I were nothing else, all my actions would always conform to the autonomy of the will...”²

From the above discussion it follows that absolute morality acquires subjectivity only in one’s mind and in subjunctive modality; it reveals its absolute categorical imperative only in regard to the individual in whose mind it exists. Absolute morality is not what an individual can prescribe or even advise to another person, for it is what one prescribes to oneself to become moral. This is just a form of self-obligation and nothing else. According to Kant, the categorical imperative is identical to the autonomy of the will, prescribing nothing but this autonomy.

MYSTIC PROHIBITIONS AND THE ABSOLUTE IMPERATIVE OF SELF-CONTROL

Since morality itself is not treated as a concrete motive of behavior, representing a kind of controlling authority designed to evaluate all other motives at their concluding stage, when these are ready to acquire the form of

a final decision and pass into an action, it can only prohibit (reject) certain actions, placing them under a rigid taboo. The same is evidenced by the subjunctive modality of moral judgments. Sentences set in the subjunctive mood disguise the negative indicative utterances: for instance, when one says “you would win” or “you would feel better,” it is implied that you have lost and you are not feeling well. As the absolute message of a moral injunction can be expressed only in the subjunctive mood, its factual meaning that can be conveyed for describing the reality is definable only through negation. Morality acquires its practical regulatory strength in the form of negation, restricting human actions. Turning once again to Kant, it should be pointed out that, though the categorical imperative in formal linguistic terms represents an affirmative judgment, its real meaning as a regulative principle is nevertheless designed to restrict maxims with the condition of their universality. Kant repeatedly stresses that morality is effective as restriction and that the demand for its applicability as a universal moral law is just a negative principle (not to contradict this law).

Morality as an absolute value cannot define what ought to be done (specified in other forms of human knowledge and practice - medicine, sociology, mechanics, dietetics, etc.), but it can and does say what must not be done under any circumstances. It acquires its potency, not just inward and spiritual, but also outward and material, in negative actions. A negative action is not identical with the lack of activity, or inaction: it represents (a) the conscious blocking by the individual of an act from among those he would have willed to perform and for which he has quite pragmatic reasons; and (b) this blockage is made for the sole reason of being ethically unacceptable. It is of particular importance to distinguish between a negative action and sinful inaction, when the individual fails to do what he ought to according to his own moral criteria. Not to do what must be done and not to do what is inadmissible are two fundamentally different kinds of inaction. In the former case, we fail to act by force of our sinful nature, whereas in the latter case we refuse to act immorally.

A negative action can be categorical and unconditional for the reason that it involves action at the point of a motive passing into decision-making, which is fully subject to man’s conscious will. George Moore in his article “The Nature of Moral Philosophy” drew attention to the fact that, when the matter involves moral obligations, one should differentiate between the rules pertaining to actions and those pertaining to thoughts, feelings, and desires. He defined the former as the rules of duty and the latter, as ideal rules. It is indispensable to make such differentiation since we can control our *actions* to a far greater extent than our *desires*. For example, a man is quite able to abstain from committing adultery, as prescribed by the sixth commandment of the Decalogue. But contrary to the tenth commandment of the same Decalogue, he is unable to preclude even the arousal of such desires in himself. A negative action means that an individual suppresses his desires, leaving them unfulfilled. And this entirely depends on his own conscious will. It is not in man’s power to whet a certain desire in himself at will, but he can always give

up the desirable. This is a case which perfectly fits into the Kantian formula: if you ought to you can.

A negative action can be not only categorical and unconditional but also universally recognized. Moreover, only this action can be recognized as such in view of its significance set by universal reason. Positive actions are always concrete, individual, being dependent on private circumstances. They are by definition as diverse as human individuals in their life situations. Therefore, it is not just impossible but even inconceivable that all people would act in the same way. It is unachievable because human actions originate in the individuals' minds and their life circumstances. But negative actions are another matter. Inasmuch as they ensue from a well-grounded and conscious restriction, they can be as universally recognized as human reason and conscious will. Hence, it is quite conceivable that all the people could reach an understanding not to commit acts universally recognized as wrong. A positive action is characterized by both the general principle (accepted by reason as a canon) and a concrete, in each case particular, matter. A negative action is invariably reduced to the general principle alone. Here the underlying principle (reason and canon) of an action completely merges with the act itself in its direct and individualized form. Hence, it is enough to be guided solely by the principle to perform this act.

A negative action can be not only universally recognized, but it can also unambiguously exclude a possibility of moralizing self-deception. To grasp the ethical qualities of a positive action, it is vitally important to comprehend its motives. But it is often extremely difficult to identify them, in particular, to differentiate between moral and pragmatic considerations and answer the question as to what extent the act was performed from duty and to what degree it was due to the maxim of seeking some profit. This kind of differentiation is too difficult to make even, and perhaps primarily, for the acting individual himself. Freud and his school told us that a human being can indulge in self-deception no less ingeniously than when he deceives others. In case of abstaining from a negative action by force of a restriction, there are no psychological grounds for moral self-deception, for passing evil for good. Here a moral motive of an action coincides with the very fact of its realization. The motives pushing toward a morally forbidden action by the very fact of pushing are recognized as immoral. As for the moral motive of a morally forbidden act, it lies in the very fact that it was not committed. And it is impossible to doubt whether the forbidden act was committed or not. The Pythagorean did not have to rack his brains over the question whether he had eaten the beans or not, just as the Christian, whether he committed adultery or not, and an advocate of nonviolence whether he committed murder or not. If the individual, determined to be perfectly frank with himself and even being guided in his reasoning by certain academic recommendations, such as Kant's categorical imperative, often fails to comprehend why he has acted in this particular way, or to be more precise, what part moral motives have played in his actions, it is quite easy for him to explain why he has abstained from committing a certain forbidden act, although he was willing, tempted, and had

all possibilities for doing it. It is amply clear that in this case he was primarily motivated by the very restriction of a forbidden act.

At first sight, it may seem that by reducing absolute morality to negative behavior we degrade it from the high-minded orbit down to the level of elementary discipline. But it is far from being so. A negative action is a forbidden act, which is not committed for the sole reason of being forbidden. Man abstains from committing it not because there was no chance or need for it, but according to his conscious (often tortuous and hard) decision not to do it contrary to his wants and chances. A forbidden (negative) action is a purely mental act, even more demanding from the point of inner concentration and personal tension than a positive action. For, in contrast to a positive action, even in the case of a highly virtuous deed, which is always psychologically motivated, manifesting the individual's intense desires, the motivation of a negative action inasmuch as it is directed at suppressing psychological impulses is purely mental, based on reason and understanding. At least, it is unarguable that the autonomy of a human spirit reveals itself more obviously and completely in negative acts than in positive actions.

Thus, morality in its absolute claims acquires practical strength through prohibitions and forbidden (negative) acts. This conclusion is corroborated not only by logical reasoning, as I tried to show. It also holds a high degree of historical validity. Prohibitions have always been the basic and most effective form of categorical moral imperatives actually practised in history. It is best illustrated and proved by Moses' code of conduct with its "You shall not kill," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," and "Neither shall you commit adultery," expressing the guiding principles of ethical life in the cultures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And to this code we can add *ahimsa* (the principle of nonviolence) serving as an ethical core of Jainism and a normative precept of Buddhism.

When asked by one of his disciples which word could be used as a guideline in one's life, Confucius replied: "Do to others as you would have others do to you." In this respect, mention should be made of two personalities who used to incarnate and advocate the idea of absolute morality in the 20th century, when it was especially hard to do so - Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi. Both of them shared the view that all the regions existing in the world are unified in their fundamental premises, but vary in external manifestations. They saw the basic unity of religions and their insemination of respective cultures with the principle of nonviolence, they strove for the embodiment of this principle that could be adequate to the current times. In my opinion, nonviolence understood literally as negation of violence represents the concrete negative form of behavior which can be regarded as a categorical imperative for our time. It imposes spiritual and physical restrictions on human activity by defining the space for a creative and natural interaction of different cultures.

THE SILENCE OF THE ABSOLUTE IN MORALITY

As for the last above-mentioned objection, it should be admitted that appeals to absolute morality encountered in actual practice of social life and the attempts to speak in its name, as a rule (with rare exceptions calling for a special study), prove to be a dubious demagoguery. But the idea of absolute morality can hardly be blamed for it. More likely, it is quite the reverse. Bertrand Russell known for his aversion to moralizing preferred to abstain from moral judgments. When one journalist, in a state of utter perplexity at the philosopher's attitude, asked him, "Would you agree at least that some actions are immoral", Russell replied: "I wouldn't use this word." This self-restraint is due not only to ethical skepticism but also ethical absolutism. The recognition of absolute morality inevitably implies that any moral judgments owing primarily to their depiction in concrete linguistic terms, leaving aside all other aspects, are relative.

An absolute value by definition can neither be described nor claimed or invoked by anybody. Those speaking and doing something in the name of absolute morality fail to do what they are preaching. However, there is no need to speak and act in the name of an absolute value. Quite the reverse, it needs nothing of this sort.

It is assumed that good deeds should be done incognito, in privacy from others and oneself. A good deed loses its ethical radiance when they start to shout about it in every nook and corner or even if the doer himself revels in it, getting filled with self-importance because of his deed. As Jesus Christ teaches us, alms should be given in private so that the left hand would not know what the right hand is doing. Here we face an apparent paradox: goodness is a category of human practice, i.e., it should actively assert itself and be visible and perceptible, but at the same time it ought to be invisible and imperceptible.

This paradox is resolved within the framework of a concept linking the active essence of a moral good with prohibitions and negative actions. A negative action is an act unrealized by virtue of a conscious decision for the reason of being ethically inadmissible. Or to put it differently, it is committed as an unrealized action. It is positive in its negativeness, for it provides a definite guideline for the individual's relations with other people, remaining meanwhile concealed from his social surroundings, for the value of the given action lies in its nonrealization. At the same time, the moral quality of a negative action is also imperceptible to the individual acting as its initiator, since it gives the latter no grounds for self-delusion. An act which was prohibited and unrealized is an unethical act (for it was prohibited primarily for its immorality). Following the logic of moral consciousness, a person cannot be proud that he has abstained from committing something bad and immoral, that he has refused either to steal, kill, or act lowly in any other way. Although the fact that he has eventually done nothing of this sort speaks in his favor, nonetheless, the very fact that he was tempted to act immorally (to steal, kill, act lowly, etc.) and had to resist this temptation testifies against him. In short,

morality in its absolute claims is not what one professes and shows off; it is what is kept silent and private. Silence can still reign in morality through a strict observance of moral prohibitions and relevant negative actions.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the idea of absolute morality represents (a) an ideal point of departure, which is set by the individual himself for the moral qualification of his behavior and defined in subjunctive modality; (b) it acquires practical strength through categorical imperatives and relevant negative actions; and (c) it is distorted and transformed into its opposite in cases of public appeals to it. To my mind, such specifications confute the arguments against the idea of absolute morality, which were put forward in the course of its theoretical and historical criticism, shedding a fresh light on it and turning it into a working idea.

There may arise a doubt: "Is it worthwhile to adhere to the idea of absolute morality; would it not be better, since it began to lose its grip, to push it down to free oneself forever from this fatality?" Perhaps, it would be better to do so, if it were possible. The renouncement of this idea is fraught with elevating any relative value to the absolute. This is what we are currently witnessing when certain people and groups present their private positions, goals, and interests as absolute ideals, the various parties speak in the name of history, different confessions of faith speak in the name of God, some states and nations assume the right to sit in judgment over others, when material assets came to replace spiritual values, and money turned into an idol for the sake of which are made far greater sacrifices than for all the idols in the past.

In my opinion, the idea of absolute morality in its proper understanding is not only compatible with cultural, confessional and political pluralism, but it serves as an indispensable premise for it.

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NOTES

1. G.E. Moore. *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1966.

2. I. Kant. *Fundamentals of the Metaphysic of Morals*. Moscow, 1965, pp. 260-261, 276, 299.

Chapter III

The Golden Mean as a Metaphorical Key to Understanding: The General and Particular in Moral Philosophy

Marietta T. Stepanyants

In my reflections on this theme I would proceed from the theoretical premises laid down in a most significant discourse in modern comparative philosophy, namely: *Interpreting Across Boundaries. New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (eds. G.J. Larson and E. Deutsch. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Let me start by quoting Daya Krishna, a distinguished Indian philosopher:

... if philosophy is an enterprise of the human reason, it is bound to show similarities across cultures to some extent and, similarly, as a human enterprise it is bound to be concerned with what man, in a particular culture, regards as *summum bonum* for mankind.¹

To the above I would add the thesis advanced by A.S. Cua:

Rather, an acknowledgement of conceptual relativity is an acknowledgement of the fact that moral notions are what they are, possessing operative significance as they do, because of the ways they are employed in situations or contexts embedded with a cultural background that has a continuing history. . . This does not mean that these notions, because of their background, do not have transcultural significance, rather, their significance depends on some convergent viewpoint of human concerns. . . There may exist functional equivalents of different moral notions in different cultures. . . Thus two different moral traditions may, on first impression, be incommensurable. But a deeper investigation into the convergence of human interests may convert an issue of a cultural vision into one of humanity as a whole.²

Finally, Henry Rosemont, a foremost American sinologist and comparatist, who suggests instead of “universal” to use the term “homoversal”³. The application of the epithet “universal” to a moral notion makes one to unjustifiably presume the general acceptance of moral norms by the entire universe, i.e., their validity for all the living creatures inhabiting it. However, if

morality is understood as belonging exclusively to the human realm, it would be more apt and precise to define it not as a universal but homoversal quality typical “for all human beings, physiologically and mentally constituted as they are.”⁴ Remaining faithful to his preferences as a sinologist and trying to illustrate his position, Rosemont cites an example from Mencius (2A6) about the similarity of feelings experienced by any person watching a child on the point of falling into a well. Such feeling is not universal but typical for a human being as a particular species of living creatures.

Virtually all those concerned with comparative philosophy point simultaneously to an identity and a difference, sometimes even incommensurability, of moral norms prevailing in different cultures.⁵ There is a tendency to exaggerate, and even treat as an absolute, one of the two characteristics. However, as Daya Krishna justly remarked, “one may cut the Gordian knot by deciding either way, but the situation would reappear again.”⁶

While sharing the view on the existence of certain universally recognized moral principles, I nevertheless cannot help but join those who continue to ask themselves: how great and extensive is this identity and how exactly it manifests itself?⁷

GOLDEN MEAN

Let us try to answer the eternal question of comparative studies by appraising the golden mean as a metaphor providing a key to understanding the general and the particular in moral philosophy.⁸

Why has the golden mean become such a popular metaphor? The prime reason lies in the human nature setting him/her apart from all the other living creatures by a goal-oriented activity. As a rational being endowed with will, a human person cannot move toward a goal without adopting a certain strategy of actions. An instinct for self-preservation and astute prudence, personal experience and that of own ancestors are all prompting a human being to be moderate and commensurate in dispositions and actions for an optimal attainment of the goals.

Yet, though all cultures seem to recognize the worth of moderation, this principle is concretized in each cultural context so that it becomes extremely difficult, if possible at all, to discern signs of its “universality”. At least two circumstances prove to be decisive in giving rise to such situations.

First, a difference in the premises for attaining a goal as a certain ideal and, second, a specific “set” of virtues within which a choice of the golden mean is made.

Greece. In ancient Greece, serving as a point of departure in the history of Western culture, *telos* represented the attainment of eudemonia (Gr. *eudaimonia*) i.e., grace, happiness, and prosperity. Ancient Greeks regarding human being as part of the macrocosm, nonetheless, tried to regulate her/his life by ethical norms so that to nullify the harm inherent in the individuality predisposed to challenge and violate the cosmic order. On the other hand,

the Greeks viewed human being not as an ordinary part of the universe, but as the one chosen by Gods. This Promethean tragic bond makes ancient ethics dynamic and restless. Ancient Greeks tried to reconcile these antinomies through the orientation toward *temperance* and *middleness*. The heroic character of ancient ethics remained intact in its ground rule: it is quite easy to go to extremes, feeling relaxed and submerged by the natural elements, but holding on to the middle requires a great and unceasing effort from the human will and reason. But how to find this middle? The pre-Socratics advised obeying the cosmic law, the Sophists offered to seek harmony in man himself, Socrates taught that one should look for a measure of all things wherever human knowledge (thought) blends with a virtue (being). Following Socrates, Plato and Aristotle brought ethics very close to ontology.

Temperance, i.e., the ability to choose the golden mean in actions, statements, etc., was esteemed by ancient Greeks as one of the basic virtues on a par with friendship, bravery, wisdom, and justice.⁹ Aristotle's definition of temperance as a virtue reflected the demand for moderation, which was ingrained in the consciousness of ancient Greeks.

India. The "specific goal" of Indian culture looks diametrically opposite to the one pursued by ancient Greeks. *Vishnu Purana* refers to Bharata as the only "land of responsible action" (*karmabhu*) and characterizes other regions as mere "areas of enjoyment."¹⁰ Not personal happiness and mundane prosperity but, on the contrary, the release from any shackles and the attainment of *moksha* – freedom from the differentiated, temporal, and mortal world of ordinary experience, new rebirths, these are the goal orientations of the Indian's all-out, primarily moral, effort.

The golden mean from a virtue prompted by common sense was transformed into the speculative theory of the Middle Way initiated by Buddha. The emergence of this teaching was due to a situation qualified as "the anarchy of morals". Buddha offers the way out of the "moral chaos" by choosing the Middle Way (*majjhima patipada* in Pali; *madhyama pratipad* in Sanskrit), which would help to avoid the two extremes. The enlightened Gautama realizes the futility of hoping for salvation through a strict observance of all the Brahmanic rituals and caste restrictions. It is as meaningless as for the ascetics to hope for the attainment of *moksha* by practising self-mortification. In Pali and other mahayanist texts, the Middle Way is a synonym to the Eightfold Path.

In Mahayana (in Sanskrit, *maha-yana* means literally the Great Vehicle, the Great Path), second of the two great schools of Buddhism, which was founded by Nagarjuna (2nd-3rd c.c.) called the "Second Buddha", the concept of the Middle Way came to embrace some new meanings, such as a moderate position between any two opposite viewpoints and, in general, between any "yes" and "no". According to the holy legend, Buddha thus instructed his disciples: "Two extremes ... are to be avoided by him who has entered into homelessness: giving oneself over to sense pleasure, which is low, debased,

worldly, ignoble, and meaningless; giving oneself over to self-mortification, which is full of suffering, ignoble and meaningless. The Perfect One avoided these two extremes and found the Middle Path, which opens the eyes, produces knowledge and leads to peace, insight, enlightenment, and nirvana; to wit, perfect knowledge, perfect outlook, perfect speech, perfect action, perfect livelihood, perfect effort, perfect mindfulness, and perfect concentration.”¹¹ This world is basically dualistic, founded on the premise of “being” and “non-being”. But for anyone who perceives the truth and wisdom, the origins of things in this world, there is no one absolute being. To regard everything as “being” or something else as “nonbeing” are two extremes. The truth lies somewhere in-between. This is never-ceasing development.¹²

It is noteworthy that the first philosophical school in Mahayana should be called Madhyamika (in Sanskrit, *madhyamika* means middlemost, halfway). The followers of Madhyamika believed that any judgment about “being” and “nonbeing” is misleading, for the wise one refuses to judge what is either being or nonbeing; to assert the eternal principles or negate them is equally meaningless.

Precious Stanzas (Rasna-Avali), the most celebrated treatise in Mahayana, intended by Nagarjuna for the educated members of the ancient Indian society, are imbued with the philosophy of middleliness:

I: 79 This sacred [Law] operating outside the [antinomy] of good and evil

Leads to a clear-cut goal.

II: 5 Guided by the highest purpose [it stands to reason that This world is outside [the antinomy] of truth and falsehood Since from the viewpoint of genuine reality It is impossible to contrast ‘being’ to ‘nonbeing’.

V: 102 All those willing to achieve the Enlightenment Attainable in accordance with the proper religious Teaching Should forever forget the extremes of the finest and the lowest.

China. The golden mean principle acquires a truly universal significance in the Chinese tradition. It plays here not only the role of a moral rule but also predetermines a specific “strategy of sense”, as demonstrated by François Jullien, the singularity of the Chinese path to a goal: not by gaining direct access, as typical for Greece, but taking a detour.¹³

According to the Confucian tradition, man is a creature endowed with five innate faculties, which indeed represent the essential virtues that should be cultivated. These include: *Jen*-humanity; *I*-righteousness and duty; *Li*-ritual propriety; *Chih*-knowledge and wisdom; and finally, *Hsin*-sincerity and veracity. It is remarkable that none of the just enumerated virtues has been defined in unequivocal and absolute terms. They receive their most adequate embodiment in the *sheng jen*, an ideal everyone should strive for, and with whose actions and words one has to collate one’s own thoughts and actions.

The *sheng jen* -- Confucius was believed to belong to this particular rank -- is first and foremost characterized by an even temper. Why is this property so essential? Because it “saves” from the danger of any deviation, violating the established order of human relations with the natural course of things. Nothing but moderateness makes a harmonious disposition possible providing an insight into the underlying deep-rooted reason of the real state of things. Using the Chinese terminology, it should be enough to enlighten the “the Way” (the Tao), which also *ad infinitum* takes its normal course and gives rise to a new life owing to its non- interference with the course of natural events.

Moderation implies abstaining from the unconditional and categorical adherence to any viewpoint, for such adherence deprives one of the faculty for evolutionary development, or to put it differently, of one’s permanent “tuning” to a harmony in the world order:

“There were four things the Master abstained from entirely: he did not speculate, he did not claim or demand certainty, he was not inflexible, and he was not self-absorbed.” (Lynyu. IX: 4).¹⁴

Any general definition of perfect wisdom is missing in the *Analects*, that is conversations of Confucius with his pupils. If the concept of “wisdom” were clearly defined, anyone striving for perfection would have to adopt it and adhere to it. But the Chinese traditional approach is different: its aim is not to direct human’s behavior from the outside, adjusting it to some teaching, but to help him/her conform to circumstances and maintain a proper equilibrium. The Master is primarily preoccupied with regulating his pupils’ behavior, which would allow them to comprehend the order reigning in the world, rather than sharing his knowledge with them and orienting them to the attainment of Truth.

The sought-after “equilibrium” is not subject to identification. François Jullien cites the following excerpt from Lynyu (IX: 11):

Yan Hui, with a deep sigh, said, ‘The more I look up at it, the higher it soars; the more I penetrate into it, the harder it becomes. I am looking at it in front of me, and suddenly it is behind me. The Master is good at drawing more forward a step at a time; he broadens me with culture (*wen*) and disciplines my behavior through the observance of ritual propriety (*li*). Even if I wanted to quit, I could not. And when I have exhausted my abilities, it is as though something rises up right in front of me, and even though I want to follow it, there is no road to take’.

As Jullien comments the above, the confusion felt by Confucius’ favorite pupil is not due to his facing the frustration of a view he was cherishing and which now looks like an obsession to him. According to commentators, the pupil is perplexed because he fails to catch the elusive ‘midpoint’ that never stops shifting (to adapt itself to the mobile course of things), but only it can allow one to maintain the steadiness of behavior, preventing its deviation

(from the model course of Heaven). And if a pupil sees it “in front of him” and suddenly it is “behind” him, it means that he was either too long kept “here” or could move too far into “there”. The Master leads him so that to equalize these two extremes.

Striving to keep a delicate balance between “excess and deficit”, the Master instructs his pupils to adhere to the principle of regulation. This is not at all to imply the existence of a certain preset and rigid principle of regulation. The latter is understood as purely contextual “bringing to conformity”. That’s why the explanations provided by Confucius seem to contradict one another.

Regulation is indispensable, for a fixed and ideal midpoint as such is nonexistent in nature. The central position, actually adequate to a concrete situation, never stays motionless (constantly following the renewal of things) and as such cannot be taken for the truth.

Following Confucius, Mencius was also preoccupied with the problem of regulation in attaining the golden mean. In his story (From *Mencius*. Book VII, Part A, 26) about Yang Tzu, who “even if he could benefit the Empire by pulling out one hair he would not do it”, and Mo Tzu, who “advocates love without discrimination”, Mencius sets the example of Tzu-mo who “holds on the middle, half way between the two extremes”. At the same time, Mencius warns that “holding on to the middle” is not necessarily to imply that one should be fixed to it, for it leads to fatal immobility. In essence, to do this “without the proper measure” (as depending on concrete circumstances, *u tzuang*) is as meaningless as to single out one thing “to the neglect of hundred others”, for in so doing you “cripple the Way”.

Islam. In Muslim culture, temperance as “middleness” between the two extremes is highly esteemed. It is noteworthy that, according to the Sunna, the Prophet Muhammad thus addressed one of his disciples: “The Messenger of Allah ... said to Ashajj Abd al-Qais: ‘You have two qualities which Allah, the Most Exalted, likes and loves: One is mildness and the other is toleration’.”¹⁵

Any deviation from the middle leads primarily to the violation of justice. In the West, it is customary to assume that justice does not exist until it is established legally. To approach this ideal, it is necessary to move forward. The very essence of a social life is seen in this progress. In the Arab-Muslim culture, the vector of movement is different, for justice is not established but restored as a lost equilibrium or harmony.¹⁶

Russia. The difference in goal orientations is due not only to cultural distinctions, but also to a situational, temporal determinant, which highlights the two sides of the golden mean so that it appears to confirm the Russian saying “all that glisters is not gold”, i.e., according to the metaphor used by the modern Russian writer Vladimir Makanin, “the averaging” may lead to both “the sunny and shady sides of the mountain”.

Syuzhet userednennosty (*The Plot of Averaging*) is the general title given by Makanin to his four stories,¹⁷ in which the author deliberates on the fundamental difference in the meaning of “averaging” and its consequences in the two so disparate periods in Russian history as the 19th and 20th centuries.

In 19th-century Russia and its great contemporary literature, the plot on associating one own “self” with ordinary people is comparable to the sunny side of the mountain, outlining a twisting path up to its top.¹⁸ The 20th century is located on the shady side of the same mountain. Here a path upon reaching the top started to descend along the shady side of the mountain, coming down eventually to its foot, i.e., to the end of the 20th century.

The plot that used to torment 19th-century writers -- that of associating oneself with ordinary people -- was a matter of personal and voluntary averaging. A completely different type of the people’s averaging occurred in the 20th century by means of revolutions, reprisals, emigrations, collectivization, and labor and detention camps.

The so-called Perestroika in Russia failed to eradicate the former kinds of averaging. Through sheer inertia, in some way or another we are still dissolving, our individuality in the popular masses. Today the Russians torment themselves just because of “the swelling of uncut free branches . . . when a person starts to feel unhappy subconsciously just because he/she cannot hide own ‘self’ any longer behind the collective ‘we’ (being unable to do so for all his/her willingness). The phenomenon of inertia, namely, voluntary desire to be like everyone, manifests itself most graphically in a queue.”¹⁹ According to Makanin, “It is a queue that consummates camps and an enforced long road toward the levelling of human space, where there is nothing left but the great being of self-averaging human mass (virtually inured to self-averaging), with this being still persisting without any effort from the outside.”²⁰

Much, if not all, therefore, depends on who and how defines the content of the golden mean, whether it is a human person guided by one’s own free will or a certain driving force, public, government, etc., outside and above. In the first case, we have movement upward to the very peak, the ideal of harmony, convergence with nature, the people, etc. on the sunny side of the mountain. The second case involves the enforced levelling of people and society, making them hold on to the middle by using sort of a steam-roller to bring them all to conform to the statistical mean akin to Sharikov, a notorious Bulgakov character, i.e., the universal averaging doggerly at the national scale.”²¹

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NOTES

1. Daya Krishna. "Comparative Philosophy: What It Is and What It Ought to Be". *Interpreting Across Boundaries. New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*. Ed. by G.J. Larson and E. Deutsch. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 71.

2. A.S. Cua. "Reflections on Moral Theory and Understanding Moral Traditions", *Interpreting...*, p. 285.

3. Henry Rosemont, Jr. "Against Relativism", *Interpreting...*, p. 52.

4. *Ibid.* The term was coined by Rosemont under the influence of Noam Chomsky's studies.

5. In this respect, the most revealing is a report delivered by Alasdair MacIntyre to the 6th East-West Philosophers's Conference in 1985 in Honolulu, which received wide response and was published later in the form of an essay: Alasdair MacIntyre. "Incommensurability, Truth and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues", *Culture and Modernity. East-West Philosophic Perspectives*. Ed. by Eliot Deutsch. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

6. Daya Krishna. "Comparative Philosophy: What It Is and What It Ought to Be", *Interpreting...*, p. 71.

7. "How similar is the similar?" is a question that can always be asked and hence as the bane of all comparisons, infecting them with an uncertainty that is irremediable in principle." (*Ibid.*, p. 71).

8. According to Karl Potter, "Finding metaphorical links provides a way of seeing conceptual schemes in a manner that does not erect such a boundary, or at least does not erect it in so absolute a fashion as to invite skeptical arguments..." (Karl H. Potter. "Metaphor as Key to Understanding the Thought of Other Speech Communities", *Interpreting Across Boundaries...*, p. 33). Potter himself refers to the treatise by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, 1980, p. 5), stating that "conceptual system is a coherent system of metaphorical concepts, where a 'metaphora' is the understanding and experiencing (of) one kind of things in terms of another."

9. See: Alasdair MacIntyre. *After Virtue. A Study of Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1981.

10. Cited from Halbfass W. *Tradition and Reflection. Exploration in Indian Thought*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1991, p. 273.

11. *Samyutta Nikaya* 56, 11.

12. See: *Samyutta Nikaya*, 22. 90, 16.

13. See: François Jullien. *Le Detour et L'Accès*, Stratégies du sens en Chine, en Grèce. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1995.

14. From (Lynyu): *The Analects of Confucius. A Philosophical Translation*. By Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr. New York: Ballantine Books, 1998.

15. From 220 Hadith. Selected and revised by Abdul Rahim Alfahim. Makkah, 1993, p. 69.

16. See: A. Smirnov, "Understanding Justice in an Islamic Context: Some Points of Contrast with Western Theories", *Philosophy East & West*, vol. 46, No. 3, July 1996.

17. V. Makanin. "Syuzhet userednennosty (A Plot of Averaging)" *Znamya* journal, no. 1, Moscow, 1992.

18. Makanin elucidates his thought with the following examples: (1) the young educated men from the highest social strata used to leave for the Caucasus. "The Caucasus is just tentatively speaking, for they left for the war, it might be a war with Turkey, the defense of Sevastopol, or the Napoleonic campaign. The simplicity of the army life, soldiers in their overcoats, halts, and camp-canisters, in a word, the whole of this nomadic life was associated in their minds with taking several steps down along the social scale... This drive for adopting the "simple life", as a rule, culminated in a field hospital." (2) Leaving for the provinces and marrying a maidservant, a petty bourgeois girl, or a Cossack woman in the attempt to live like a *muzhik*, as exemplified by Leo Tolstoy et al. (*Ibid.*, p. 120.)

19. As Makanin writes, "It is so simple to stand in a queue, for until I'm recognized, ready to join the flock, and can stand still, shoulder to shoulder, head to head, together with all the rest, those in a queue wouldn't insult me, being filled with sympathy and even love for me, dissolving my individuality in theirs and regarding me as a statistical average. But as it generally happens with a mob, those standing in a queue feel still dissatisfied with the outward averaging, striving for complete convergence and, therefore, you have to meet them halfway somehow and resort to the befitting facial mimicry" (p. 110)

20. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

21. "Much more frightening is the integrated will of Sharikovs ... Here the poor 'souls' themselves, both from the top and the bottom, rushed to get averaged as soon as possible... Thousands upon thousands of "I-ness" started to run in all directions, fussing around, feeling apprehensive, trying to keep silent and remain as inconspicuous as possible. Now these modest people wished only to hide and nothing else. Meanwhile, the middle-of-the-roaders in their triumph strove all the more to hold on to the middle. Formerly supporting the entire top of a pyramid with their hands raised unanimously upward, these people came to swing around more and more confidently and eventually dropped their hands in a spurt and, all of a sudden, this powerful anticaryatid appeared no longer to support but suppress, using both hands, the intellectuals on the one hand, and all the wretched people, on the other hand..." (*Ibid.*, pp. 121-122).

Chapter IV

Morality and Pathology: A Comparative Approach

Hans-Georg Moeller

DAOIST PRELUDE

Common sense tends to praise morality for contributing to a person's or a society's health, but some philosophies challenge such a view. In a masterpiece of ancient Chinese thought, in the Daoist "classic" *Zhuangzi*, there appears a legendary Daoist sage named Xu You who, in an obviously non-common-sense manner, conceives of morality as something pathological. When this Daoist sage was approached by a person who had just been visiting the Confucian model of morality, the sage ruler Yao, the following dialogue arises:

Xu You [the Daoist master] said [to Yi Erzi, the man approaching him]: "What kind of assistance has Yao [the Confucian sage and model of morality] been giving you?"

Yi Erzi said: "Yao told me: 'You must learn to practice benevolence and righteousness and to speak clearly about right and wrong.'"

"Then why come to see *me*?" said Xu You. "Yao has already tattooed you with benevolence and righteousness and cut off your nose with right and wrong. Now how do you expect to go wandering in any far-away, carefree, and as-you-like paths?"

"That may be," said Yi Erzi. "But I would like, if I may, to wander in a little corner of them."

"Impossible!" said Xu You. "Eyes that are blind have no way to tell the loveliness of faces and features, eyes with no pupils have no way to tell the beauty of colored and embroidered silks."¹

The Daoist master clearly regards it as hopeless to instruct somebody who has been already "infected" with Confucian morality which he compares to the bodily mutilation inflicted on people by ancient Chinese legal punishment: tattooing the skin and cutting off the nose. From a Daoist point of view, such a "mutilation" prevents people from taking the course of the Daoist way,

the so-called “wandering in any far-away, carefree, and as-you-like paths.” Looking at the world through the eyes of morality and applying to the world the distinction of right and wrong is compared to be being blind or having eyes without pupils and therefore being unable “to tell the loveliness of faces and features” and “the beauty of colored and embroidered silks.” Once being harmed by a moral outlook on the world, one has become truly -- in the literal sense of the word -- *in-sane*.

Besides the imagery of pathology applied in this ancient Daoist critique of morality, two structural characteristics can be highlighted: Firstly, the moral distinction -- the ability “to speak clearly of right and wrong” -- is obviously conceived as a distinction superimposed on more basic features such as certain “natural” or “aesthetic” qualities enabling us to recognize things like lovely faces and fine materials. In this way, the moral distinction (between right and wrong or good and bad) is portrayed as an unnecessary and secondary distinction blurring our perception of the world and irritating our behavior. Secondly, the Daoist sage’s philosophical stance on morality may be described as a kind of “negative ethics,” an ethics being an analysis, critique and negation of morality. The discipline of ethics thus becomes a reflection on morality and is aimed mainly at being a warning against the risk of morality.

Oddly enough, these characteristics of the ancient Daoist critique of morality -- the imagery of pathology, the conception of moral distinctions as a kind of distinctions superimposed on more basic distinctions, and the conception of ethics as a critical reflection on morality and a warning against morality -- reappear, albeit within a totally different theoretical context, in an eminent German sociologist’s analysis of the role of morality in the present-day world. Thus, the Daoist dialogue quoted above may serve as a kind of pre-modern prelude to a “negative ethics” in postmodern times.

LUHMANN ON MORALITY

Most likely totally unaware of his strange Daoist predecessors, Niklas Luhmann, the German “Anti-Habermas,” if one might say so, declared:

“In normal everyday interaction, after all, morality is not needed anyway; it is always a symptom of the occurrence of pathologies.”²²

Luhmann’s skepticism towards morality is grounded on the observation of a certain “problem of morality”:

“Whenever the catchword ‘morality’ appears, the experiences Europe has had with morality since the Middle Ages should actually demonstrate this problem well: religiously adorned upheavals and suppressions, the horrors of inquisition, wars all about morally binding truths and revolt arising in indignation.”²³

The observation of this specific “problem” of the “catchword” morality leads Luhmann to a critical examination of morality as a somewhat pathological phenomenon of communication and to establishing a new kind of ethics able to respond to what may be called the specific conditions of morality in the current society.

Since this new kind of ethics is part of a general social theory, namely Luhmann's version of social systems theory, it can be adequately understood only in the context of this theory, and specifically in the context of two of its basic premises. By shortly describing these two premises I hope to shed some light on Luhmann's general theory, and thereby to explain how and why Luhmann arrives at his kind of a "negative ethics".

The first premise of Luhmann's social analysis of our times is the historical hypothesis that there occurred in Europe a radical transformation between the 16th and 18th century which totally reshaped society and, accordingly, made the earlier -- in Luhmann's words the "old-European" -- world-view somewhat obsolete. This change consisted in the breakdown of "stratified differentiation" as the main structural characteristic of medieval and early modern Europe. "Stratified differentiation" means that society is hierarchically divided into different social strata. The boundaries separating the different strata -- such as the ruling aristocracy and the ruled vassals -- are the main boundaries dividing and thus ordering society. In early modernity these boundaries collapse and are replaced by an entirely different form of boundary as the ordering structure of the new world. The new boundaries no longer separate social strata, but separate different functional systems without a hierarchical pattern. Modern society is thus characterized by a completely new form of differentiation called "functional differentiation". Society is now structured by several autopoietical and operationally closed functional subsystems, such as the economy, law or politics. Within the super-system of society, none of the sub-systems can claim a central or leading position.

The second premise embedded within Luhmann's historical hypothesis is the methodological decision for a systemic model of the world conceiving of the present-day society as a super-system of autopoietical, operationally closed, functional subsystems such as politics, law, religion and many others. Obviously, the just mentioned historical revolution is a *systemic* revolution: stratum-*systems* are replaced by functional *systems*. The quite unique historical perspective of Luhmann's theory is entirely dependent on his systemic methodology. In the following, I will describe how Luhmann's theory of morality and ethics emerges from his systemic-historical argumentation.

This description should start with Luhmann's general definition of morality -- which is, in fact, rather simple: Morality is the specific type of communication for processing information on esteem or disesteem. Morality means, so to speak, the conditions in the market of social esteem.⁴

Luhmann stresses that, historically speaking, in the stratified old-European society the conditions in the market of social esteem were largely set up in the form of *manners*.⁵ Social agents or persons were born into a certain stratum and obtained an identity by being placed at a certain position within this stratum. Manners were connected to every social position or placement, and a person could gain social esteem by acting in accordance with the manners connected to his or her position. Moreover, there existed a single source providing the semantics of morality in medieval Europe: Christian religion. In this way, medieval society was highly integrated: People were fixed

to a single social position and identity adorned with a specific set of manners or rules of morality. And there was only one unchallenged authority which morally integrated society -- the church.

In early modernity this situation changed dramatically. Unlike in a stratified society, social agents are no longer restricted to a single, multi-functional social unit -- to their family and its stratum. In a functionally differentiated society one's social life is no longer determined by, for instance, being born as female member of a peasant family or as a male descendant of an aristocratic clan. In modernity, social life requires one to act within many different functional systems: one has to earn money in the economy system, one is a citizen within the political system, and one has to arrange a significant part of one's social activities within the limits of legal procedures. Along with this functional diversification and de-integration of social life, morality can no longer be measured by manners, and, in addition, this disintegration of society and moral standards is accompanied by the church's loss of an unrivaled supremacy concerning the vocabulary of morality.

What happens then to morality in modern times and under the condition of a functionally differentiated society? Niklas Luhmann suggests that, given the fact of the breakdown of the older social distinctions and boundaries, and taking into account the decline of Christianity, there "emerges the ambition for a universal and yet socially practicable morality on an individual basis deeper than all social divisions, and even religions."⁶

But where was one to discover such a new foundation of morality if it could no longer be found within the social reality or religious dogma at hand? Morality had lost its social and religious "anchorage" (*Verankerung*),⁷ and thus there appeared the need for a new theoretical endeavor aimed at founding morality on itself, on its own inherent principles. Now the time for a philosophical "ethics" in a strict sense had come: Ethics now became, according to Luhmann, for the first time in history a truly "reflective theory of morality" (*Reflexionstheorie der Moral*). This "new type of ethics" tried to discover the universal *reasons* inherent in morality. Luhmann names two main representatives of this theoretical awakening: Kant and Bentham. These two philosophers -- each in his own way, of course -- did not merely tell us what moral behavior is and where we could possibly find it, their ethics was intended to be a reflective description of the grounds of morality: Luhmann notes that "The ethics of utilitarianism and of transcendental theory both aimed at a rational or (in the exceptional German case) a reasonable justification of moral judgments."⁸

In this way -- or in these ways -- ethics was established as a philosophical discipline of a different kind and under new conditions and Luhmann praises the theoretical achievements of philosophers like Kant and Bentham who were able to establish a new kind of ethical thought and thereby to react to social change. However, he thinks that neither Kant's nor Bentham's ethics provides a suitable description of the function of morality in our present society. And it is rather obvious, in retrospect, that their epistemological optimism regarding the possibility of constructing a universally valid ethics proved to

be unwarranted. Empirically speaking, Luhmann says, academic ethics have failed.⁹ No philosophical ethics was able to provide generally accepted “reasons” for morality. Unlike medieval Europe, in our times no single source exists for moral semantics: “Paradigm Lost” is the title of one of Luhmann’s articles on morality and ethics.

So what can be done? Can the lost paradigm be regained? Luhmann is skeptical about this and quite frankly states that he does not believe in a paradigmatic ethics for our society. He argues -- somewhat similar to the American neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty -- that contemporary ethics should refrain from attempting to find ‘the’ reasons for ethics. He says: “Ethics can’t provide reasons for morality. It finds morality to be there, and then it is confronted with the problems resulting from this finding.”¹⁰

But even if a contemporary ethics has to give up the struggle to provide definite reasons for morality, it can still -- in the tradition of early modern ethics -- be a reflective theory of morality. It can provide a theory of how morality functions within a functionally differentiated society, and thus it can even make some suggestions on how to deal with morality. In this way, ethics is a kind of theoretical reflection emerging from the simple fact that morality exists and that it is possible to comment on this fact.

Thus, Luhmann’s ethics begins with an explanation of morality. This explanation is, of course, neither transcendental nor rationalistic, existential or psychological; it emerges from social theory. According to systems-theory, the notion of society is not based on the notion of “human beings”, or “consciousness” but on the notion of autopoetical *communicative* systems. For Luhmann, the term “social system” is synonymous with the term “communication system” -- and social theory is synonymous with communication theory.

From the point of view of such a systemic approach, all social operations are communicative operations, and, consequently, the phenomenon of morality also has to be understood in connection with the operations within communication-systems. In this vein, Luhmann defines morality as the specific type of communication for processing information on esteem or disesteem. Following Talcott Parsons, Luhmann makes a distinction between “approval” and “esteem”. While approval is distributed according to achievements in limited contexts (such as good results in sports, arts, or education), esteem concerns the acceptance of the whole person as a communicative agent.¹¹

Morality as the species of communication distributing esteem or disesteem among the agents of communication -- i.e. among “persons” in the sense of systems theory -- is not confined to a single social system. It can be used in diverse systems such as science and politics or law. All these different functional systems operate on the basis of their own codes: the code of science is true/false, the code of politics is government/opposition and the code of law is legal/illegal. The code of morality, i.e. good/bad which is applied to social agents is not such a code in the sense of a foundation of a single and autonomous social sub-system. It is, instead a specific code which is “universally” applicable in all social systems. Whereas the fundamental codes of

the different functional systems in themselves are “amoral,” all systems can, nevertheless, add moral communication to their code.

In politics, for example, the difference between government and opposition is not to be initially equated with the difference between god and evil or social esteem and social disesteem.¹² The same is true for law, education, economics, and even for science. A poor philosopher, for instance, may be so totally disapproved of by his colleagues, say, that they deny him positions and refuse him publication space. But even proven a total failure in his field of research, he may still not be disesteemed as a person, and his wife may not want to divorce him, and his friends may still send him Christmas cards. (At least, one hopes so.)

However, even though morality is not a basic code of any social subsystem, it can be applied within every single one. Though in itself amoral, political or educational or scientific communication can become, so to speak, morally “loaded.” A political system tending towards totalitarianism will tend to equate the distinction government/opposition with the distinction good/bad -- just like a tyrannical teacher will equate good and bad grades with the good/bad-person-distinction or a Calvinist economist will equate the distinction between the rich and the poor with the distinction of people being good or bad in the eyes of God.

This is the reason why Luhmann points out that, empirically speaking, moral communication is closely related to conflict and force: it polarizes. Communication on esteem or disesteem of social agents leads to a sort of “over-engagement” (*Überengagement*),¹³ to a kind of communicational fundamentalism.

One aspect of this inherent tendency of moral discourse is that moral communication is based on the “interdiction of self-exemption.”¹⁴ Once engaging in moral discourse, one cannot but identify oneself with the positive side of the esteem/disesteem-distinction. As soon as one starts to argue morally -- by disesteeming others -- one brings one’s own self-esteem into play. One exposes oneself through morality, one connects one’s viewpoints with moral conditions, one introduces self-esteem and estimation of others into social discourse, and once this has happened, it will be hard to step back. “In this way” Luhmann says “wildfires can be started.”¹⁵ History attests that the most brutal wars and the most despicable crimes against humanity were often accompanied by moral communication.

The analysis of moral communication shows that it leads “to a rapid fixation of positions, to intolerance, and to conflict.”¹⁶ It considerably increases the risks of communication, it is a risk in itself. Moral communication is *risky* communication.

By discovering the risk of morality, Luhmann suggests a different kind of ethics for our current times of “functional differentiation”: He advocates an ethical philosophy that should “warn of morality.”¹⁷ This may be the main function of an ethics reaching beyond the textual traditions of a past society.

From the point of view of this projected ethics, morality is, as quoted at the beginning of this paper, a “symptom of the occurrence of pathologies.” Using one of Luhmann’s metaphors, it infects social discourse like bacteria infect the human body. Luhmann concedes that, just as bacteria in the human body have a certain function, so morality has a certain function in society, too. However, ethical philosophy, like medical science, should always keep an eye on these “bacteria” to prevent them from increasing in such numbers as to cause inordinate sickness and pain. One should, Luhmann says, be very cautious with morality and “only touch it with the most sterile instruments and with gloves on,” since it is a “highly contagious substance” that can easily infect people.¹⁸

It should be pointed out that, being a “reflective theory of morality,” Luhmann’s ethics is unable to provide guidelines for a practical morality. It is not immediately concerned with specific moral or immoral “acts” itself such as acts of charity or doing harm. It conceives of morality as a communicative phenomenon. As a theory of moral communication, it is also unable and unwilling to offer advice to people confronted with “actual” moral crises. It wouldn’t be of any help, for instance, to a woman having to decide for or against an abortion. However, it would be able to explain why, for instance, moral communication on such an issue as abortion sometimes leads to “over-engaged” discourse resulting in defamations or even assassinations of social agents.

MORALITY, MASS MEDIA, AND WAR

In connection with Luhmann’s analysis of morality -- and also somehow relating to the ancient Chinese Daoist’s “negative ethics” -- I would conclude with some deliberations on the specific function of morality in today’s society. I believe -- and here I have been again inspired by Niklas Luhmann -- that morality or moral communication, though in principle applicable within every social system and to every system’s code, is most intimately intertwined with a certain social system that has become more and more eminent in recent history and evolved as a kind of systemic shooting-star: the system of mass media.

In the so-called “information age” in which we are supposed to be currently living in, the mass media generate information, condense and articulate social “beliefs” and thus present us with what is called “public opinion”. They function as a means to transform dispersed and unspecified attitudes into common orientations and provide society with topics to communicate, and what is more, with patterns of how to communicate these topics.

Of course, “information” in general and moral information in particular has always been produced in human society. However, during the ages of “stratified differentiation” the creation of “public opinion” by means of mass information was in the hands of the ruling strata. At those times mass media were literally *media*: they were not yet an independent social system and communication tool of the highest strata. As it is commonly known, at the

time of its invention the printing press was mainly used for the production of bibles, it was used as a machine working for the clergy.

Along with the growth of mass media communication and the shift from stratified to functional differentiation, the situation changed profoundly. Mass media “emancipated” themselves from being mere “media” and established themselves as an autonomous system. As long as they had been tools in the hands of a certain social stratum, for instance a political or economical elite, they gained and lost credibility along with that stratum and were unable to acquire the status of a dependable and stable source for “public opinion”. Today it is different: The so-called “free” media are mostly believed to truly provide “public opinion,” and systems like the political one have to entrust their “information” to the system of mass media in order to be present in the market of public opinion. The political system cannot literally “dominate” the mass media under the conditions of a functionally differentiated society. Rather, the political system and the mass media system “meet” in the market of public opinion.

Of course, systems such as the political one still “influence” the mass media, but this influence resembles the influence the weather has on the weather report. The weather may be as complex a phenomenon as it may be, it will only get access to mass communication through that friendly man or woman speaking after the news and using always the same terminology and the simple distinctions between warm and cold, and rain and no rain to present it to us. The weather is observed by the weather report not in terms of the weather itself (the weather has no such terms) but in terms of the weather report, and only through these terms does the weather enter into the communication of the observers of the weather report.

However, unlike the weather, the political system (and other systems, too) can actively observe the mass media, it can observe how the mass media observe it and how these mass media reports are then observed by the public. The way the mass media will communicate a certain political act is predictable in the same way as it is predictable how the mass media will communicate a change in the weather. Thus, as opposed to the weather, the political system is able to anticipate the mass media reaction to its own systemic operations. This becomes especially relevant in times of actual or potential political crisis. During election times or during war times it is essential for politics to behave -- and this always means: to communicate -- in such a way that the mass media will report on this behavior in a favorable way. The election will be won by the party which is most successful in predicting the mass media reaction, since only the mass media are technically able to create “public opinion”. And once political bodies declare a war, it is even more decisive to win the favor of public opinion by correctly predicting the mass media reactions and attributions to political communication. Polls are steadily made in and through the mass media in order to help politics to assess its current success in ensuring the support of “public opinion”.

On September 14, 2001, the president of the USA received an unprecedented approval rate of 85 percent in his country along with his declaration

of war against terrorism. This high approval by “public opinion” seems to be a result of the president’s ability to effectively predict the mass media reaction on what he was communicating, and, as I will further explain below, it also may well relate to his massive deployment of moral semantics. (The president repeatedly stated that he was about to lead a war of the good against the evil.) The American president has, as the statistics suggests, been extremely successful in gaining public acclamation by establishing a distinction between good and bad and by identifying himself and those who support him with the positive side of this distinction. It seems that there is a direct link between one of the most pathological social situations, namely war, and one of the most pathological ways of communication, namely moral coding.

In the process of the shaping of public opinion through so-called information, morality is an important means. Mass media not only transform an amorphous mass of social data into “information,” but also “enrich” this information with certain communicative ingredients in order to “sell” it. Information cannot be effectively presented as long as it is insipid, as long as it does not appeal to the customer’s emotions, as long as it is hard to digest. Thus, the mass media tend to supply practically all the information they present with patterns for further processing -- they supply information with communicative tools enabling the customers of the information to deal with it and to continue communication. One of the most effective of these communicative tools is moral coding.

Information without moral coding -- without a distinction between the good and the bad -- is less attractive to the information customer, since it is quite hard to comment on it and thus to use this information for further communication. Once information has been supplied with a moral coding, it is easy to take a stance. When we not only know that something has happened, but, in addition, that something good or bad has happened, we are easily able to talk about it and to side with what is “right” -- we can much more easily engage (and “over-engage”) in communication. This is what “public opinion” is mainly about: It is by no means “mere” communication, it is communication enriched with “opinions,” with the distinction between what is right and what is wrong. Public opinion is mostly moral opinion, it polarizes, and thus it is, referring once more to Luhmann’s analysis of moral communication, directly related to conflict.

The decisive role of moral communication for the autopoiesis of the mass media and the proximity of this type of communication to social conflict becomes most obvious when the topic of communication is war. Mass media communication on war tends to be extremely moral even when the countries where the mass media are operating are not (or not yet) part of the conflict. Intensified moral communication -- communication distinguishing between friends and foes and what is good and what is evil -- precedes and accompanies wars. War is one of those social state of affairs which attracts mass media communication immensely: It is the incarnation of communicative conflict, and thus it is a -- or even “the” -- preeminent topic for moral mass media communication.

The intimate relationship between mass media, morality and war is by no means restricted to news reports on actual wars. The rhetorical pattern of “war” shapes reports on many other issues: we read about wars against drugs and crimes and health reports tell us about the wars against Aids and cancer. Warlike communication abounds in many areas that “public opinion” touches: we are encouraged to *combat* racism and pollution, and sometimes we are even supposed to *fight* against war.

Of course, war and moral communication are not only present in mass media news reports. They are also an essential element of entertainment programs. War movies depict human history as a history of wars, specifically of wars of good people against bad ones. The Hollywood movie, *The Patriot*, for instance, showed how the Americans who loved freedom and democracy were able to defeat the British oppressors, and thus the high level of violence in this film was more than justified. Another even more successful and even more violent Hollywood movie, *Gladiator*, transformed ancient Roman history in such a way that the public could watch how back in old Europe even many centuries ago brave rebels fought against brutal dictatorship for the sake of liberalism. The categories of good and bad shaped in the political reports are transferred into such entertainment programs and *vice versa*.

Moral coding is not restricted to only one kind of program. By employing the very same moral code news and entertainment programs are made to overlap and relate to each other. This is customer-friendly. We do not need history lessons to understand what *Gladiator* is about. It is enough to follow the headlines and the moral coding of current news reports. And, likewise, films like *Gladiator* help the news customer to fill his or her imagination when he or she is watching a report on, for instance, American forces attacking a rogue state regime.

The mass media have become the most eminent social battlefield in a functionally differentiated society, they are the place where good and bad fight against each other on many different grounds and for twenty-four hours a day. This is, in itself, neither good or bad, but an ethical reflection on mass media might, however, not only care about cruelty and sexuality shown on the screen, it may also take into account the social risk of the steady exposure to highly moral discourse in the mass media. As both contemporary Luhmannians and ancient Chinese Daoists might agree, moral communication superimposes distinctions between good and bad on more basic distinctions and thus it is risky and close to social conflict and to the use of military force -- be it the force of regular armies or of terrorists.

If, taking into account the above deliberations, one of the now fashionable “commissions on ethics” (*Ethikkommission*) should decide to ask some Daoists and “Luhmannians” to joining it, one may envision the following suggestion to the government made by such a commission: It may demand that public broadcasts and performances which contain a high dose of morality -- for instance some American movies, many news reports and not a few televised speeches by politicians -- be supplemented with an obligatory warning, just like the ones we find on cigarette packs, saying something like:

“This product is full of morality and may therefore lead to unwanted communicative over-engagement, possibly resulting in damage to both personal and social health”. However, I personally suspect that such a warning, like the ones on cigarette packs, may not be very successful in preventing people from taking a risk which has become for them quite a cherished habit.

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NOTES

1. Quoted from the translation by Burton Watson: *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. New York, London: Columbia University Press, 1968. 89. Cf. *Zhuangzi yinde*, Peking 1947, 18/6/82-19/6/86.

2. Niklas Luhmann, *The Reality of the Mass Media*. Translated by Kathleen Cross. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000. 79.

3. Niklas Luhmann, “Ethik als Reflexionstheorie der Moral,” 370. Original: “die Erfahrungen, die Europa seit dem Hochmittelalter mit religiös aufgezogenen Aufständen und Unterdrückungen, mit den Schrecken der Inquisition, mit Kriegen um moralisch verbindliche Wahrheiten und mit aus Empörung entstandenen Revolten gemacht hat, sollten eigentlich beim Stichwort Moral immer gleich dieses Problem vor Augen führen.”

4. Niklas Luhmann, *Paradigm lost: Über die ethische Reflexion der Moral: Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Hegel-Preises 1989*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990. 19. Original: “die Konditionen des Achtungsmarktes”.

5. Niklas Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1997. 1038.

6. Niklas Luhmann, “Politik, Demokratie, Moral,” 18. In: *Normen, Ethik und Gesellschaft*. Edited by Konferenz der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1997. Original: “...entsteht die Ambition einer universellen und doch gesellschaftspraktischen Moral, auf individualistischer, alle sozialen Einteilungen und selbst die Religionen unterlaufender Grundlage.”

7. Niklas Luhmann, “Ethik als Reflexionstheorie der Moral,” 416; in: *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik*, Vol. 3, 358-447. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1993.

8. Niklas Luhmann, *Paradigm lost: Über die ethische Reflexion der Moral: Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Hegel-Preises 1989*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990. 21. Original: “In der utilitaristischen ebenso wie in der transzendentaltheoretischen Ethik ging es um die rationale bzw. (im deutschen Sonderfall) vernünftige Begründung moralischer Urteile.”

9. Niklas Luhmann, “Politik, Demokratie, Moral,” 17.

10. Niklas Luhmann, “Ethik als Reflexionstheorie der Moral,” 360. Original: “Die Ethik kann die Moral nicht begründen. Sie findet sie vor, und sie hat es dann mit der Problematik dieses Befundes zu tun.”

11. See, for example, Niklas Luhmann, *Paradigm lost: Über die ethische Reflexion der Moral: Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Hegel-Preises 1989*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990. 17-18. (Referring to Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, Glencoe, Ill: 1951. 110, 130.)

12. Niklas Luhmann, *Paradigm lost: Über die ethische Reflexion der Moral: Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Hegel-Preises 1989*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990. 24.

13. Niklas Luhmann, *Paradigm lost: Über die ethische Reflexion der Moral: Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Hegel-Preises 1989*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990. 26.

14. Niklas Luhmann, "The Sociology of the Moral and Ethics," 29. *International Sociology* 11.1 (March 1996), 27-36.

15. Niklas Luhmann, "Ethik als Reflexionstheorie der Moral," 370. Original: "So können Steppenbrände entstehen."

16. Niklas Luhmann, "The Morality of Risk and the Risk of Morality," 92. *International Review of Sociology* 3 (1987), 87-101.

17. Niklas Luhmann, "The Morality of Risk and the Risk of Morality," 94.

18. Niklas Luhmann, "Ethik als Reflexionstheorie der Moral," 359. In: Niklas Luhmann, *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik. Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft, Band 3*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1993. 358-447.

Chapter V

‘The Science of Man’ and Moral Philosophy: Relations of Facts and Values

Roger Smith

As David Hume famously observed: ‘There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz’d in the science of man, and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science.’ (Hume 1739/1888, xx) A little later, Denis Diderot wrote: ‘What precise notion can we have of good and evil, of beauty and ugliness, of good and bad, of true and false, without a preliminary knowledge of man? ... How many philosophers, failing to make these simple observations, have prescribed for man the morality of wolves, as stupidly as though they had prescribed for wolves the morality of man.’ (Diderot, *Salon de 1767*, quoted in Wilson 1972, 663) For these brilliant representatives of the western Enlightenment, a world of human nature awaits discovery, observed regularities will become ‘the science of man’, and this science will inform us how to judge and to act. On the basis of the science of man, Hume and Diderot looked forward to establishing the sciences of government and wealth (which Adam Smith, Hume’s friend, called ‘the science of a statesman or legislator’), of jurisprudence, of ethics and of aesthetics. Their hope inspired generations. Down to our own day, progressive thinkers, social reformers and political activists have turned to the disciplines of social and psychological science, political science, economics and management for the resources with which to create a better world. These modern disciplines are heir to the eighteenth-century science of man, and reliance on them for social and political policy recreates Enlightenment ideals.

No one, however, could mistake the early twenty-first century disillusionment -- intellectual, moral and political -- with belief that knowledge of humankind leads to collective virtue. Little of human science, it seems, decisively informs the complex realities of political, ethical and aesthetic culture. At times there appears to be a direct antagonism between legitimate democratic decision-making, let alone populist sentiment, and science-informed policy. Moreover, scientific activity itself, notably in micro-biological genetics, in making it possible ‘to know’ man, has also made it possible (or will make it possible) ‘to recreate’ what we may continue, or not, to call ‘man’. There is bewilderment and disagreement about how such scientific activity relates to moral discourse. The faith that ‘knowledge of man’ will lead to precise knowledge of good and evil is in tatters

I propose in this paper to look again at the science of man and ethical discourse. This is to look at the relation of facts and values from a historical vantage point. Other writers, such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, have turned to the historical interpretation of the impasses in contemporary

moral life. (MacIntyre 1981; Taylor 1989) Their analyses of what it is to have knowledge of man -- or, in modern idiom, knowledge in the human sciences -- also argue that such knowledge is inherently interpretative and historical. Since knowledge of what we are changes what we become, no rigorous predictions for human life are possible. We know ourselves in retrospect not in prospect: 'Human science looks backward. It is inescapably historical.' (Taylor 1971/1985, 57)

One point needs immediate clarification. Throughout the paper, I use phrases such as 'the science of man' and 'man's nature'. I trust it will be understood that I here follow eighteenth-century English-language usage. It also should be clear, however, that eighteenth-century writers, when they represented what they took to be human universals in male grammatical form, were making judgments (which I do not share) about the norms of what it is to be properly human. But there was also a rich eighteenth-century literature about distinctions between men and women, as there was about different types of human beings, and there were proponents of 'a science of woman'. (Jordanova 1995; Tomaselli 1985)

The roots of Hume's and Diderot's claims lay in the field of what many contemporaries would have identified as 'moral philosophy'. To understand this, the clarification of a historical shift of meaning is necessary; and this clarification suggests a major theme for discussion. Moral philosophy, in the twentieth-century English-language scheme of disciplines, was ethics, and its history the history of argument about the grounds of moral judgment from Socrates to American naturalism and to emotivism, traditionally taught through 'the great texts'. Recent historical work increased the range of historical reference but still equated moral philosophy and ethics. All the same, the differentiation of moral philosophy as a specialised field of professional philosophy is relatively modern; in Britain, it dates from late-Victorian changes in university organisation. Earlier, as the historian of moral philosophy J. B. Schneewind has pointed out, moral philosophy denoted a much broader field, though never a clear-cut discipline, of Christianised Aristotelian learning, and this lasted into the eighteenth century. (Schneewind 1997) Moral philosophy existed as one of the five *studia humanitatis* and also as a heading for practical teaching, closely linked to rhetoric, politics and jurisprudence, about the proper conduct of life. Curriculum and content varied considerably between schools and teachers. The meaning of the word 'moral' also indicated the earlier form of moral philosophy. The Latin word '*moralis*' was used as a translation of the Greek notion of 'pertaining to character', a person's disposition to one rather than another pattern of conduct. (MacIntyre 1981, 37) Moral philosophy, then, was the field, both theoretical and practical, concerned with character. It is noteworthy that it contained no suggestion of the modern distinction between fact and value.

The content of moral philosophy taught in the Renaissance and early modern period also derived from the opposition between the word 'moral' and the word 'natural'. Moral philosophy, in contrast to natural philosophy, concerned itself with the human sphere, the world that human beings in some

sense cause through their own actions, the world of custom, law and government, the world of language, art and philosophy, and the world of character and judgment. This understanding of moral philosophy placed the study of man apart from the study of nature (encompassed by *physica*). But this did not distinguish facts and values, in the manner in which a modern writer might wish to separate the human from the natural sphere, but separated, for practical purposes, the sphere of action of human character. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French writers, with the authority of Montesquieu and Buffon, recreated the separation by contrasting '*physique*' and '*moral*'. With this language they embedded in different institutions the study of man as physical being and man as agent. (Wokler 1993, 1995)

But the division of learning, in which physics teaches knowledge of nature and moral philosophy teaches knowledge of man, was never that clear cut. This was for the obvious reason that no one doubted that man exists in the physical world and shares its nature, even when Christians believed his essence to exist apart. The boundary between natural and moral philosophy was subject to argument, negotiation and change. The Aristotelian account of the soul, a mainstay of the curriculum of European universities, actually worked against any sharp separation of natural and moral philosophy, since it articulated an account of the soul which stretched from its activities as the first principle of life to the pure contemplation of reason. Aristotelian discussion of the soul posited a significant element of continuity across the border, which in other contexts had significance, between the physical and the moral. The philosopher Gary Hatfield has drawn attention to the extent of scholarship (especially in the German-language cultural area) on a 'science of mind' (his term) in early modern Aristotelian texts, as part of the curriculum of *physica*, not moral philosophy. (Hatfield 1995) In this setting, the study of man was not especially part of moral philosophy but part of the sciences of nature.

This question of the boundary between natural and moral philosophy, and of the place of the study of higher human capacities like reason and moral action in learning, became yet more complex in the seventeenth century. The new search for certainty in knowledge conducted by philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz and Locke, as well as the new metaphysics of nature later known as 'the scientific revolution', had ambivalent implications. On the one hand, philosophers sharpened the distinction between mind and body, between the science of the rational soul and the science of material nature. But, on the other hand, they argued that the right manner of gaining knowledge, which they claimed to be establishing, applied equally to man and nature. Further, they maximised the scope of explanations of the kind **that applied for** physical nature. Descartes expanded the study of physical nature to include all those aspects of the human sphere where the soul interacts with body, as in perception, passion and memory. Locke developed an account of human action that explained action as the result of pleasure and pain, implying the causal determination of events in the human as in the physical sphere.

Moral philosophy also exhibited no clear shape as a subject because of the intimate connections of human character and conduct with theology and

faith. In early modern Europe, the dominant position in the academy was, of course, **that** knowledge of moral philosophy was inferior to theology in terms of significant truth. Unquestioned belief in the presence of a God-given soul also added weight to the view that knowledge of man in moral philosophy must be significantly distinct from knowledge of nature. And we should not forget the power of this belief, expressed in Catholic and Orthodox dogma, down to the present day, nor the clarity of ethical principles which was thereby sustained. In the words (the religious content of which other passages sought to undermine) of the great *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D'Alembert: 'Morality is the same everywhere. It is the universal law which the finger of God has written on all hearts. It is the eternal precept of common *sensibilité* and of common need.' (Article, '*Irréligieux*', quoted in Wilson 1972, 488) As the *Encyclopédie* made abundantly clear, however, by the eighteenth century the question of the relation between such faith and a new sensibility about man as a part of nature loomed large and troubling.

Jumping to the twentieth century, we observe the institutional and intellectual separation of moral philosophy, now conceived as a specialist branch of philosophy, from the human sciences. The teaching of moral philosophy as it had existed in the Aristotelian-Christian curriculum, leading to a practical as well as theoretical appreciation of character, had completely disappeared. Perhaps the last flowering of the ideal was in the liberal arts colleges of the United States in the nineteenth century. (Richards 1995) The idea that the sciences study humankind as it exists in fact while ethics studies the grounds of evaluative judgment, while both kinds of studies are divorced from context and history, gained status. In the rest of the paper, I make some suggestions about the history and meaning of these changes. It must be borne in mind that, were the account to be historically more specific, it would have to recognise the variety of European and North-American detail. (Smith 1997)

The flowering of philosophical culture in Scotland is of special interest. Here, during the first half of the eighteenth century, moral philosophy provided an institutional umbrella beneath which teachers shaped what they called 'the science of man'. As professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow in the 1750s, Smith lectured on jurisprudence, the origin and nature of language, the science of wealth and the moral sentiments. Adam Ferguson, who took up the chair of moral philosophy in Edinburgh in 1764, filled his student textbook on the 'Institutes of Moral Philosophy' with the regularities observed in man's physical, mental and moral nature. (Hatfield 1995, 207-8) In his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), he assembled these observed regularities into a historical narrative of civilised and moral society.

Ferguson was a Christian moralist, strongly committed to belief in a God-given moral human identity: the 'affection, and force of mind, which are the band and strength of communities, were the inspiration of God, and the original attributes in the nature of man'. (Ferguson 1767/1966, 205) Like other Scottish teachers, he built on the 'moral sense' arguments brought to Scotland by Francis Hutcheson. We carry out moral actions, Hutcheson,

Ferguson and many other British writers believed, because a moral sense is an intrinsic part of human nature. Through this moral sense, which as an 'inner' sense is analogous to, **but also different from, the 'outer' senses, and** through the affections (in modern language, the emotions) which accompany it, each person, Hutcheson argued, perceives the virtuous qualities of things or actions. The Third Earl of Shaftesbury (who was tutored by Locke) compared these natural human affections to the strings of a musical instrument, tuned to a natural harmony. We vibrate in harmony or discord with the virtue or vice of actions.

These arguments are of great interest in tracing the roots of modern debates about facts and values. These eighteenth-century writers propagated Christian morality, and they did so by describing the human capacity for morality as 'natural'. Of course, for them this was no contradiction, since in their world God was the fount of all creation and moral feeling. Their moral discourse nevertheless encouraged the observation and classification of moral feelings and moral actions like any other aspect of the natural world. They advanced a 'natural history' of the feelings and of character -- and readers read their work alongside descriptions of the feelings in the new genre of the novel of sentiment. Readers admired Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), for example, for its rich descriptions of human feelings and responses, and not only for its moral theory. Hume and others called this observational approach to understanding man 'experimental', thus firmly associating the study of human nature with the study of physical nature. The Scottish science of man sought knowledge of man's physical, mental, moral and social nature as a whole. In this context, then, the teaching of moral philosophy led to the coming together of natural and moral philosophy and to conviction that the science of man's nature provides the basis for understanding moral action.

Articulated within a traditional Christian framework, the arguments nevertheless lie at the basis of modern views with little Christian content. The Christianity of the pre-modern world conceived of moral action as a struggle against fallen nature. Moral philosophy in the eighteenth century, which had once distinguished the moral sphere of human character as acting to counter nature (while yet recognising sense in which man was natural), increasingly described man's morality as a capacity of nature. And this occurred within, and not in opposition to, Christian thought.

It is helpful to note the significant openness of the English word 'nature' to a multiplicity of meanings. Several different denotations came together in the eighteenth-century science of man. (Smith 1995) First, 'nature' referred to the essence or being of some thing, that which makes it what it distinctively is. Christian thought classified a hierarchy of natures, using the word in this sense; this was the chain of being. Then, in early modern Europe, it also became customary to use 'nature' to refer to the state of the world, including man in the world, independent of, or before, man created custom and civilization. This usage drew a contrast between 'nature' and 'civilized society', not between nature and man, and it flourished in political thought about the state of nature and about whether, in this state, man was naturally

sociable or naturally individual. What I have stressed in discussing the moral sense is the way usage identified man's moral being with a state of nature: moral nature (being) is identified with nature (the state which logically, and -- as the eighteenth century increasingly expressed it -- historically precedes civilization). But if at the beginning of the eighteenth century 'nature' denoted everything that exists independently of human culture, over the next two centuries western thought shrank the distinction between nature and culture, so much so that, by the end of the twentieth century, many people understood everything human in terms of physical and biological nature. This shrinkage began with a pun -- nature (being) became nature (the world preceding culture).

These momentous shifts of meaning, and hence of the sense of what it is to be human, altered the notion of moral philosophy. The Enlightenment *philosophes* and Scottish moralists perpetuated the view that man has a moral nature. But whereas Catholic and Orthodox belief held that this moral 'nature' (or being) was the 'finger of God', transcending nature, enlightened opinion turned towards the view that this moral 'nature' was in nature itself, part of human nature. Thomas Hobbes, in the seventeenth century, drew out the 'modern' conclusion that natural and moral philosophy alike are the study of natural law. In Hobbes's words: 'The Science of ... [Natural Laws] is the true and onely Moral Philosophy. For Morall Philosophy is nothing else but the Science of what is Good and Evill, in the conversation, and Society of mankind. Good and Evill are names that signifie our Appetites, and Aversions ...' (Hobbes 1651/1991, 110) It followed that, if humankind is to understand what is good and not good, and to know how to act rightly, it must first learn what it is in its nature -- its 'appetites and aversions'. Knowledge of these feelings and of the regularity of the actions that they lead to is, then, the basis for a science of ethics. From the argument that identified moral discourse as part of the discourse of nature came modern utilitarianism, which derives criteria for evaluation from the consequences of actions to human well-being.

Utilitarian ways of thought ramified into all aspects of western life, and it is obviously far beyond the scope of one paper to trace them. I will observe only that it was the intellectual framework which brought together natural and moral philosophy. The classic discussion is in John Stuart Mill, in his argument for the establishment of what he called 'moral science'. (Mill 1843/1900, Part VI) In his view, natural science and moral science are equivalent forms of knowledge; both consist of bodies of general laws established by induction from the particularities of experience. In his view, the full development of moral science will occur only with the future establishment of the science of individual character -- with knowledge of how individual women and men acquire their distinctive feelings, capacities and character. For him, the old appellation, 'moral philosophy', though it too had studied character, had lost its usefulness. The name that Mill chose instead reflected his belief that the study of man should take its place within unified science. He reserved the word 'ethics' for the practical art of applying the knowledge which moral science provides. Later professional philosophers, however, separated the study

of moral theory, which they called ethics, from the empirical human sciences, which purportedly studied facts free of moral evaluations.

The early eighteenth-century discussions about the natural moral sense and about the dependency of moral action on natural feelings of appetite and aversion, or pleasure and pain, set the terms for modern discussions of the relations of facts and values. But neither the language of fact and value nor the sharp distinction between them which the terms imply was then evident. Indeed, Enlightenment moral philosophy characteristically portrayed knowledge of man's moral nature, identified as part of nature, as the basis for moral action. For Diderot, knowledge would liberate man from the Christian religion 'that has founded the existence of natural duties upon a lie, in order to have the right to govern men by authority and not according to nature'. (Quoted in Wilson 1972, 438) For Ferguson, moral feelings were 'the inspiration of God'. But for both, one religious and the other irreligious, the facts of human nature constitute values. (I here use anachronistic language.) It was the logic of this that was to prove troubling to later philosophers. Even Hume, who is now cited as the classic source of the logical distinction between 'is' and 'ought' statements, also took it for granted that human feelings (what 'is') are the basis for carrying out our duties (what 'ought' to be).

It was only in the late nineteenth century and later that it appeared important to separate moral philosophy from the science of man, breaking with the earlier conception of moral philosophy as the science of what pertains to man's character and action. The change is deep and significant for modern thought about values. The study of man's nature -- transformed in the late nineteenth-century into the modern disciplines of the social and psychological sciences -- includes the study of what values, as a matter of fact, are, but excludes criteria for judgment. The new sciences are part of what Max Weber referred to as 'the disenchantment of the world'. Yet the modern political and social commitment to the social and psychological sciences has remained what it was for Mill, for Auguste Comte or for Herbert Spencer in the nineteenth century, as earlier for the philosophers of enlightenment. We need scientific knowledge of women and men as the basis for the good life. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the resulting quandary has not been resolved. In as far as the human sciences claim objectivity by restricting themselves to facts, they provide no criterion for evaluating what to do. But for those who believe that the only valid modern knowledge is scientific knowledge, knowing what to do cannot be based on anything but the facts of nature.

Awareness of these difficulties is not new. Diderot saw to the heart of the central question and expressed it with unparalleled wit. A translator of Shaftesbury, he adapted the Englishman's notion of the moral sense into the belief that natural feelings and needs should guide actions: 'When we are born we bring nothing into the world with us except a constitution similar to that of other human beings -- the same needs, an impulsion toward the same pleasures, a common dislike of the same pains: that is what constitutes man as he really is, and what should be the basis of a morality appropriate to him.' (*Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, quoted in Wilson 1972,

592) What man 'really' is, he argued, man's nature and not the pious hopes and deceptions of priests, should be the basis of human morality. But what *is* man's nature? And what if that nature, on investigation, turns out to be evil, as indeed the Old Testament account of the Fall of Man had maintained? In the early eighteenth century, both French libertines and Bernard Mandeville's argument that private vices might be public virtues had publicized the view that human nature might be far from good in the conventional sense. Diderot was quick to grasp the conundrum that the new moral philosophy faced. As he wrote, if 'nothing that exists can be either against nature or outside nature', then what people are, whether in conventional terms it is good or bad, moral or immoral, is the basis for 'morality'. Once human nature is equated with nature, nothing appears to be left but to embrace what nature teaches. In a quip about children that Freud made famous, Diderot observed: 'If your little savage were left entirely to himself, if his childish ignorance were left intact, if he were allowed to acquire all the violent passions of a grown man while still remaining as deficient in reason as he had been in his cradle, then he would end up strangling his father and going to bed with his mother.' (*Le neveu de Rousseau*, in Diderot 1966, 140) Christian writers had proposed that actions should follow the moral sense. But Christian argument here turned sour -- so sour that Diderot's essay was not publishable until long after his death. Diderot opened up the rational question that Shaftesbury in his Christian complacency had not foreseen. What happens when the 'facts' in nature on which we are supposed to build a moral life point towards the naturalness of immorality?

A number of responses were forthcoming. **There were those writers**, such as Bishop Joseph Butler, who argued, like Shaftesbury, that the substance of human nature is, in fact, moral. This argument merged with what was to become the utilitarian view of moral actions, that what is good is what enhances the feelings of pleasure or happiness. Smith, for example, believed in moral sentiment as a natural capacity of people, and he considered that this sentiment makes it inevitable that an individual shares the feeling of others. Thus, in protecting our own feelings, we serve the feelings of others; what is natural for us, is also good for all. Though in different terms, Rousseau explored the same argument that there is goodness in our very nature.

A second response, which Diderot pictured with ironic humour and the Marquis de Sade enacted with the leaden weight of an obsession, was to throw overboard Christian morality and embrace our nature for what it appears to be, even if that nature is violent, lustful and indifferent to all but self. For de Sade, the Christian moralists are liars, and 'the suckling babe that bites his nurses nipple, the infant constantly smashing his rattle, reveal to us that a bent for destruction, cruelty, and oppression is the first which Nature graves in our hearts...'. (de Sade, *Juliette* 1991, 317) De Sade read widely in physiology and, whatever his notoriety, only took to an extreme the logic of earlier proposals to found morality on nature.

A third response was implicit in Diderot's description of the child's desire to sleep with his mother and strangle his father. This appears to me to be the interesting and significant response. As Diderot wrote, the child

might do these things *'if* left to himself. The 'little savage', however, was never 'left entirely to himself' and was human precisely because he existed and grew as a social being. The child, as a human child, we might say, is a social as well as physiological being. The first two responses shared a crucial point in common, however much Shaftesbury's view of the naturalness of the moral sense differed from de Sade's view of the naturalness of violence. Both responses assumed that the natural facts relevant to morality are facts about people conceived independently of the social nature of people. But as Diderot's description of the 'savage' child implied, this child is a fiction: the human child is reared in society and is not a savage, though of course she sometimes acts in what we call a savage way.

The matter was much confused in the eighteenth century. Both Christian moralists and enlightened *philosophes* wanted to criticise existing society, and to this end they used the trope of a state of nature. They contrasted an imagined human nature with actual human activity as if this were a contrast between two real human conditions. The contrast made possible the moral judgments they wished to draw -- about the artifice of custom, the oppression of kings, or the viciousness of education of which they disapproved. The contrast also made it **intensely interesting to argue a number of questions, such as whether man, in nature, is asocial or social, whether language is natural to man or acquired, and what happens to man reared outside of society (as with so-called 'wild children')**. So, when writers argued for natural goodness they often had in mind this opposition to the status quo rather than any substantial claim about 'nature'.

Many authors were deeply aware of human social nature. Eighteenth-century writers, for example, became accomplished in the theatrical art of imagining their own way of life viewed from outside -- from *Gulliver's Travels*, through Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, to Diderot's Hawaiian priest who ridicules Bougainville's sexual hypocrisy. There were rich precedents and resources with which to characterise human nature as a social nature. Hume wrote that 'we can form no wish which has not a reference to society. ... Ourselves, independent of the perception of every other object, is in reality nothing.' (Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, quoted in Carrithers 1995, 250) Ferguson argued that 'man is, by nature, the member of a community ...' (Ferguson 1767/1966, 57) And, as he also observed, with much insight: 'We speak of art as distinguished from nature; but art itself is natural to man.' (*ibid.*, 6) The contrast in accounts of human nature between what is 'original' to man and what is the outcome of 'civilization' was, in the final analysis, rhetorical not philosophical. As Ferguson observed, it is man's nature to create civilization, and hence the way he lives in civilization is as much a part of his nature as any imagined pre-civilised condition. Though largely ignored by his contemporaries, Giambattista Vico's *Scienza nuova* (the last version appeared in 1744) achieved subsequent fame for elaborating this stance. It was Vico's bold claim, precisely because human beings have made their civilizations and hence made themselves what they are, that this making or history can be known with a certainty which knowledge of physical nature cannot achieve.

One of the most influential approaches to human social nature derived from Samuel Pufendorf, the legal and political theorist and historian. His starting point was Hobbes's infamous claim (as it was then understood) that natural man is individual, amoral and asocial. Agreeing with Hobbes that we can imagine a natural man born without innate morality and asocial, Pufendorf nevertheless believed that the conditions of life necessarily made real, as opposed to abstract, men moral and social. In his great work, *De jure naturae et gentium* (1672), he set out to 'make Enquiry into that most General and Universal Rule of human Actions, to which every Man is oblig'd to conform, as he is a reasonable Creature'. (Pufendorf 1717, vol. I, 117) Man, he argued, is by nature both committed to his self preservation, and 'reasonable'. It is therefore in his nature to discover how to act to preserve himself, which requires him to act sociably. 'This then will appear a Fundamental Law of Nature, Every Man ought, as far as in him lies, to promote and preserve a peaceful Sociableness with others, agreeable to the main End and Disposition of the Human Race in General.' (*ibid.*, 137) On this basis, he deduced a system of legal principles reflecting the natural right of each man to self-preservation, a classic elaboration of natural law argument. He held that the growth of man's sociability expresses his nature. If man's sociability is a historical and not an original presence in a supposed natural state, it is even so natural not artificial.

With Pufendorf, Vico and Ferguson, topics in moral philosophy concerning man's nature, character and morality began to become questions about the moral life that man has created for himself at particular times and under particular conditions. They remained firmly within a Christian framework which grounded the conditions of life in transcendent *telos*. But we may with some legitimacy here trace the roots of the modern western view, that we cannot divorce moral discourse from the conditions of life, the moment of history, in which it is uttered.

Eighteenth-century moral philosophy described morality as a collective and historical phenomenon as well as a faculty or sentiment of the individual soul. This exploration of human nature ramified into all aspects of life -- literary and domestic, as well as political and economic. For a few notable decades in Scotland, it appeared possible to hold the many strands together, to create in the universities a science of man under the institutional heading of moral philosophy. In France, to make the obvious comparison, the literature on the science of man came from outside the universities and broke with teaching organised according to the Aristotelian curriculum. In both settings, however, by the end of the eighteenth century it was evident that what had once been a unified conception of moral philosophy was breaking apart. The specialised disciplines of psychology, history, political economy, biology, philosophy and so on were beginning to flourish as independent, if still related, social and intellectual undertakings. Moral philosophy, as a recognised division of the educational curriculum and intellectual landscape, disappeared and the modern disciplines of the human sciences emerged. This created the circumstances in which 'moral philosophy' acquired its modern, restricted western meaning --

the study of ethical principles. By contrast, the moral philosophy of an earlier period took the much broader view that a science of man *is* the study of moral being. And it opened up the view that this being is historical, the view without which it is hard to imagine there being any comprehension, let alone accommodation, between different moral claims from around the world.

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Chapter VI

From Religion through Philosophy to Literature: The Way Western Intellectuals Went

Richard Rorty

The question “Do you believe in truth?” sounds fatuous and pointless. Everybody knows that the difference between true and false beliefs is as important as that between nourishing and poisonous foods. Nevertheless, the question “Do you believe in truth or are you one of those frivolous postmodernists?” is frequently asked by journalists who are interviewing intellectuals. That question now plays the same role that used to be played by the question “Do you believe in God, or are you one of those dangerous atheists?”. People suspected of postmodernism are frequently told that they do not love truth sufficiently. This admonition is delivered in tones in which their predecessors were reminded that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Obviously, the sense of the word “truth” invoked by this question is not the everyday one. Nobody is worried about a mere nominalization of the adjective “true”. The question “do you believe that truth exists?” is shorthand for something like “Do you think that there is a natural terminus to inquiry, a way things really are, and that understanding what that way is will tell us what to do with ourselves?”

Those who, like myself, find themselves accused of postmodernist frivolity do not think that there is such a terminus. We think that inquiry is just another name for problem-solving. We cannot imagine inquiry into how human beings should live, into what kind of people we should try to be and what sort of society we should try to create, coming to an end. For solutions to old problems will produce fresh problems, and so on forever. As with the individual, so with both the society and the species: each stage of maturation will resolve previous dilemmas only by creating new ones.

Problems about what to do with ourselves differ, in this respect, from scientific problems. A complete and final unified science, an harmoniously orchestrated assemblage of scientific theories none of which will ever need to be revised, is, perhaps, an intelligible goal. Scientific inquiry might, conceivably, terminate. So if a unified account of the causal relations between all spatio-temporal events were all that were meant by “truth”, even the most far-out postmodernists would have no reason to doubt truth’s existence. The existence of truth only becomes an issue when another sort of truth is in question.

I shall use the term ‘redemptive truth’ for this sort of truth -- for a set of beliefs which would end, once and for all, the process of reflection on what to do with ourselves. Redemptive truth would not consist in theories about how things interact causally, but instead would fulfill the need that religion and philosophy have attempted to satisfy. This is the need to fit everything --

every event, every person, every idea--into a single context, a context which will somehow reveal itself as natural, destined, and unique. It would be the only context that would matter for purposes of shaping our lives, because it would be the only one in which those lives appear as they truly are. To believe in redemptive truth is to believe that there is something that stands to human life as the elementary particles of modern physics stand to the four elements -- something that is the reality behind the appearance, the one true description of what is going on, the final secret.

Hope for redemptive truth is one species of a larger genus. The larger genus is what Heidegger called the hope for authenticity -- the hope to be one's own person rather than merely the creation of one's education or one's environment. To achieve authenticity in this sense is to have seen one or more alternatives to the purposes that most people take for granted, and to have chosen among these alternatives--thereby, in some measure, creating yourself. As Harold Bloom has recently reminded us, the point of reading a great many books is to become aware of a great number of alternative purposes, and the point of *that* is to become an autonomous self. Autonomy, in this un-Kantian and distinctively Bloomian sense, is pretty much the same thing as Heideggerian authenticity.

I shall define an intellectual as someone who yearns for Bloomian autonomy, and is lucky enough to have the money and leisure to do something about it: to visit different churches or gurus, go to different theatres or museums, and, above all, to read a lot of different books. Most human beings, even those who have the requisite money and leisure, are not intellectuals. If they read books it is not because they seek autonomy but either because they wish to be entertained or distracted, or because they want to become better able to carry out some antecedent purpose. They do not read books to find out what purposes to have. The intellectuals do.

Given these definitions of the terms "redemptive truth" and "intellectual", I can now state my thesis. It is that the intellectuals of the West have, since the Renaissance, progressed through three stages: they have hoped for redemption first from God, then from philosophy, and now from literature.

SOURCES OF REDEMPTION: RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

Religion of the standard Western monotheistic type offers hope for redemption through entering into a new relation to a supremely powerful non-human person. A claim to have grasped truth--as in assent to the articles of a creed -- may be only incidental to such a relationship. One's relation to God is only incidentally a relation to a set of beliefs. For philosophy, however, beliefs are of the essence. Redemption by philosophy is through the acquisition of a set of beliefs which represent things in the one way they really are. Literature, finally, offers redemption through making the acquaintance of as great a variety of human beings as possible. Here again, as in religion, grasping the truth

of propositions may be of little importance. Grasping redemptive truth is a specifically philosophical form of the achievement of Bloomian autonomy.

From within the literary culture which is dominant among today's intellectuals, religion and philosophy appear as literary genres. As such, they are optional. Just as an intellectual may opt to read many poems but few novels, or many novels but few poems, so he or she may read much philosophy, or much religious writing, but relatively few poems or novels. The difference between the literary intellectuals' readings of all these books and other readings of them is that the inhabitant of a literary culture treats books as human attempts to meet human needs, rather than as acknowledgements of the power of a being that is what it is apart from any such needs. God and Truth, are, respectively the religious and the philosophical names for that sort of being.

The transition from religion to philosophy began with the revival of Platonism in the Renaissance, the period in which humanists began asking the same questions about Christian monotheism that Socrates had asked about Hesiod's pantheon. Socrates had suggested to Euthyphro that the real question was not whether one's actions were pleasing to the gods, but rather which gods held the correct views about what actions ought to be done. When that latter question was once again taken seriously, the road lay open to Kant's conclusion that even the Holy One of the Gospels must be judged in the light of one's own conscience.

The transition from a philosophical to a literary culture began shortly after Kant, about the time that Hegel warned us that philosophy paints its gray on gray only when a form of life has grown old. That remark helped the generation of Kierkegaard and Marx realize that philosophy was never going to fill the redemptive role that Hegel himself had claimed for it. Hegel's supremely ambitious claims for philosophy almost instantly flip-flopped into their dialectical opposite. His System was no sooner published than it began to be treated as a self-consuming artifact, the *reductio ad absurdum* of a form of intellectual life that suddenly seemed to be on its last legs.

Since Hegel's time, the intellectuals have been losing faith in philosophy, in the idea that redemption can come in the form of true beliefs. They have ceased to believe that there is a single context in which human life will appear as it truly is. So in the literary culture which has been emerging during the last two hundred years, the question "Is it true?" has yielded pride of place to the question "What's new?"

Heidegger thought that that change was a decline, a shift from serious thinking to mere gossipy curiosity. (See the discussions of *das Gerede* and *die Neugier* in sections 35-36 of *Sein und Zeit*.) Many fans of natural science, people who otherwise have no use for Heidegger, would agree with him on this point. On the account I am offering, however, this change is an advance. It represents a desirable replacement of bad questions like "What is Being?", "What is really real?" and "What is man?" with the sensible question "Does anybody have any new ideas about what human beings might manage to make of themselves?"

I shall be describing the literary culture in more detail shortly, but first let me return to the contrast between religion and philosophy. In its pure form, undiluted by philosophy, religion is a relation to a non-human person. This relation may be one of adoring obedience, or ecstatic communion, or quiet confidence, or some combination of these. But it is only when religion has become mingled with philosophy that this non-cognitive redemptive relation to a person begins to be mediated by a creed. Only when the God of the philosophers has begun to replace the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is correct belief thought to be essential to salvation.

For religion in its uncontaminated form, argument is no more in point than is belief. To become a New Being in Christ is, Kierkegaard insisted, not the same sort of thing as being forced to grant the truth of a proposition in the course of Socratic reflection, or as the outcome of Hegelian dialectic. Insofar as religion requires belief in a proposition, it is, as Locke said, belief based on the credit of the proposer rather than belief backed by argument. But beliefs are irrelevant to the special devotion of the illiterate believer to Demeter, or to the Virgin of Guadalupe, or to the little fat god on the third altar from the left at the temple down the street. It is this irrelevance that intellectuals like St. Paul, Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth -- spiritual athletes who relish the thought that their faith is a folly to the Greeks -- hope to recapture.

To take the philosophical ideal of redemptive truth seriously one must believe both that the life that cannot be successfully argued for is not worth living, and that persistent argument will lead all inquirers to the same set of beliefs. Religion and literature, insofar as they are uncontaminated by philosophy, share neither of these convictions. Uncontaminated religion may be monotheistic in the sense that a community may think it essential to worship only one particular god. But the idea that there can be only one god, that polytheism is contrary to reason, is one that can only take hold after philosophy has convinced us that every human being's reflections must lead to the same outcome.

As I am using the terms "literature" and "literary culture", a culture which has substituted literature for both religion and philosophy finds redemption neither in a non-cognitive relation to a non-human person nor in a cognitive relation to propositions, but in non-cognitive relations to other human beings, relations mediated by human artifacts such as books and buildings, paintings and songs. These artifacts provide glimpses of alternative ways of being human. This sort of culture drops a presupposition common to religion and philosophy -- that redemption must come from one's relation to something that is not just one more human creation,

Kierkegaard rightly said that philosophy began to set up itself up as a rival to religion when Socrates suggested that our self-knowledge was a knowledge of God -- that we had no need of help from a non-human person, because the truth was already within us. But literature began to set itself up as a rival to philosophy when people like Cervantes and Shakespeare began to suspect that human beings were, and ought to be, so diverse that there is no point in pretending that they all carry a single truth deep in their bosoms.

Santayana pointed to this seismic cultural shift in his essay “The absence of religion in Shakespeare”. That essay might equally well have called “The absence of either religion or philosophy in Shakespeare” or simply “The absence of truth in Shakespeare”.

I suggested earlier that “do you believe in truth?” can be given both sense and urgency if it is reformulated as “Do you think that there is a single set of beliefs which can serve a redemptive role in the lives of all human beings, which can be rationally justified to all human beings under optimal communicative conditions, and which will thus form the natural terminus of inquiry?” To answer “yes” to this reformulated question is to take philosophy as the guide of life. It is to agree with Socrates that there is a set of beliefs which is both susceptible of rational justification and such as to take rightful precedence over every other consideration in determining what to do with one’s life. The premise of philosophy is that there is a way things really are -- a way humanity and the rest of the universe are and always will be, independent of any merely contingent human needs and interests. Knowledge of this way is redemptive. It can therefore replace religion. The striving for Truth can take place of the search for God.

It is not clear that Homer, or even Sophocles, could have made sense of this suggestion. Before Plato dreamt them up, the constellation of ideas necessary to make sense of it were not available. But Cervantes and Shakespeare both understood Plato’s suggestion and distrusted his motives. Their distrust led them to play up diversity and downplay commonality---to underline the differences between human beings rather than looking for a common human nature. This change of emphasis weakens the grip of the Platonic assumption that all these different sorts of people should be arranged in a hierarchy, judged on the basis of their relative success at attaining a single goal. Initiatives like Cervantes’ and Shakespeare’s helped create a new sort of intellectual -- one who does not take the availability of redemptive truth for granted, and is not much interested in whether either God or Truth exist.

This change helped create today’s high culture, one to which religion and philosophy have become marginal. To be sure, there are still numerous religious intellectuals, and even more philosophical ones. But bookish youngsters in search of redemption nowadays look first to novels, plays, and poems. The sort of books which the eighteenth century thought of as marginal have become central. Doctor Johnson and Voltaire, the authors of *Rasselas* and of *Candide*, helped bring about, but could hardly have foreseen, a culture in which the most revered writers write neither sermons nor treatises, but stories.

For members of the literary culture, redemption is to be achieved by getting in touch with the present limits of the human imagination. That is why a literary culture is always in search of novelty, always hoping to spot what Shelley called “the gigantic shadows that futurity casts upon the present”, rather than trying to escape from the temporal to the eternal. It is a premise of this culture that though the imagination has present limits, these limits are capable of being extended forever. The imagination endlessly consumes its

own artifacts. It is an ever-living, ever-expanding, fire. Though what Bloom calls “the fear of belatedness” is ever present within the literary culture, this very fear makes for a more intense blaze.

The sort of person I am calling a “literary intellectual” thinks that a life that is not lived close to the present limits of the human imagination is not worth living. For the Socratic idea of self-examination and self-knowledge, the literary intellectual substitutes the idea of enlarging the self by becoming acquainted with still more ways of being human. For the religious idea that a certain book or tradition might connect you up with a supremely powerful or supremely lovable non-human person, the literary intellectual substitutes the Bloomian thought that the more books you read, the more ways of being human you have considered, the more human you become -- the less tempted by dreams of an escape from time and chance, the more convinced that we humans have nothing to rely on save one another. The literary intellectual does not believe in redemptive truth, but she does believe in redemptive books.

REDEMPTION IN HUMAN IMAGINATION AND SELF-RELIANCE

I hope that what I have said so far has given some plausibility to my thesis that the last five centuries of Western intellectual life may usefully be thought of first as progress from religion to philosophy, and then from philosophy to literature. I call it progress because I see philosophy as a transitional stage in a process of gradually increasing self-reliance. The great virtue of our new-found literary culture is that it tells young intellectuals that the only source of redemption is the human imagination, and that this fact should occasion pride rather than despair.

The idea of redemptive truth requires the conviction that a set of beliefs which can be justified to all human beings will also fill all the needs of all human beings. But that idea was an inherently unstable compromise between the masochistic urge to submit to the non-human and the need to take proper pride in our humanity. Redemptive truth is an attempt to find something which is not made by human beings but to which human beings nonetheless have a special, privileged relation not shared by the animals. The intrinsic nature of things is like a god in its independence of us, and yet -- so Socrates and Hegel tell us -- self-knowledge will suffice to get us in touch with it. One way to see the quest for knowledge of such a quasi-divinity is, as Sartre saw, a futile passion, a foredoomed attempt to become a for-itself-in-itself. But it would be better to see philosophy as one our greatest imaginative achievements, on a par with the invention of the gods.

Philosophers have often described religion as a primitive, insufficient unreflective attempt to philosophize. But, as I said earlier, a fully self-confident literary culture would come to think of both religion and philosophy as relatively primitive, yet glorious, literary genres. They are genres in which it is now becoming increasingly difficult to write, yet the genres which are replacing them might never have emerged had they not been written first as swerves away from religion, and later as swerves away from philosophy. So

religion and philosophy are best seen not as ladders to be thrown away, but rather as stages in a process of maturation. The maturation of the human race is a process that we continually look back over, and recapitulate, in the hope of attaining still greater self-reliance.

In the hope of making this account of philosophy as a transitional genre more plausible, I shall say something about the two great movements in which philosophy culminated. Philosophy began to come into its own when the thinkers of the Enlightenment no longer had to hide behind the religious masks worn by Descartes, Hobbes and Spinoza, and were able to be openly atheistic. These masks could be dropped after the French Revolution. That event, by making it plausible that human beings might build a new heaven and a new earth, made God seem far less necessary than before.

That new-found self-reliance produced the two great metaphysical systems in which philosophy culminated. First came the metaphysics of German idealism, and second, the reaction against idealism which was materialist metaphysics, the apotheosis of the results of natural science. The first movement belongs to the past. Materialist metaphysics, however, is still with us. It is, in fact, pretty much the only version of redemptive truth presently on offer. It is philosophy's last stand, its last attempt to provide redemptive truth and thereby avoid being demoted to the status of a literary genre.

This is not the place to recapitulate the rise and fall of German idealism, nor to eulogize what Heidegger called "the greatness, breadth, and originality of that spiritual world." It suffices for my present purposes to say that Hegel, the most original and daring of the German idealists, believed himself to have given the first satisfactory proof of the existence of God, and the first satisfactory solution to the traditional theological problem of evil. He was, in his own eyes, the first fully successful natural theologian -- the first to reconcile Socrates with Christ by showing that the Incarnation was not an act of grace on God's part but rather a necessity. "God", Hegel said, "had to have a Son" because eternity is nothing without time, God nothing without man, Truth nothing without its historical emergence.

In Hegel's eyes, the Platonic hope of escape from the temporal to the eternal was a primitive, albeit necessary, stage of philosophical thinking -- a stage that the Christian doctrine of Incarnation has helped us outgrow. Now that Kant has opened the way to seeing mind and world as interdependent, Hegel believed, we are in a position to see that philosophy can bridge the Kantian distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal, just as Christ's stay on earth overcame the distinction between God and man.

Idealist metaphysics seemed both true and demonstrable to some of the best minds of the nineteenth century. Josiah Royce, for example, wrote book after book arguing that Hegel was right: simple armchair reflection on the presuppositions of common sense, exactly the sort of philosophizing that Socrates practiced and commended, will lead you to recognize the truth of pantheism as surely as reflection on geometrical diagrams will lead you to the Pythagorean Theorem. But the verdict of the literary culture on this metaphysics was nicely formulated by Kierkegaard when he said: "Had Hegel written

at the end of his book 'this was all just a thought-experiment' he would have been the greatest thinker who ever lived. As it is he is merely a buffoon."

I would rephrase Kierkegaard's point as follows: if Hegel had been able to stop thinking that he had given us redemptive truth, and claimed instead to have given us something better than redemptive truth -- namely a way of holding all the previous products of the human imagination together in a single vision -- he would have been the first philosopher to admit that a better cultural product than philosophy had come on the market. He would have been the first philosopher to self-consciously replace philosophy with literature, just as Socrates and Plato were the first self-consciously to replace religion with philosophy. But instead Hegel presented himself as having discovered Absolute Truth, and men like Royce took him with a seriousness which now strikes us as both endearing and ludicrous. So it was left to Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, to tell us that the premise common to Socrates and Hegel should be rejected. The idea that our self-knowledge is a knowledge of God was, Nietzsche thought, a great imaginative achievement. But it has now outlived its usefulness.

Between Hegel's time and Nietzsche's, however, there arose the second of the great philosophical movements, one which bore the same relation to Democritus and Lucretius that Hegel had borne to Parmenides and Plotinus. This was the attempt to put natural science in the place of both religion and Socratic reflection, to see empirical inquiry as providing exactly what Socrates thought it could never give us -- redemptive truth.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, it had become clear that mathematics and empirical science were going to be the only areas of culture in which one might conceivably hope to get unanimous, rational agreement -- the only disciplines able to provide beliefs which would not be overturned as history rolls along. Natural science began to appear as the only source of propositions that were plausible candidates for the status of insight into the way things are in themselves, independent of the contingencies of human history. Unified natural science still seems to many intellectuals to be the answer to Socrates' prayers.

This project of giving redemptive status to empirical science still appeals to two sorts of present-day intellectuals. The first is the kind of philosopher who insists that natural science attains objective truth in a way that no other portion of culture does. These philosophers usually go on to claim that the natural scientist is the paradigmatic possessor of intellectual virtues, notably the love of truth, which are scarcely to be sought among literary critics. The second sort of intellectual who continues along the lines laid down by the nineteenth century positivists is the kind of scientist who announces that the latest work in his discipline has deep philosophical implications: that advances in evolutionary biology or cognitive science, for example, do more than tell us how things work and what they are made of. They also tell us, these scientists say, something about how to live, about human nature, about what we really are. They provide, if not redemption, at least wisdom -- not

merely instructions on how to produce more effective tools for getting what we want, but wise counsel about what we should want.

I shall take up these two groups of people separately. The problem about the attempt by philosophers to treat the empirical scientist as a paradigm of intellectual virtue is that the astrophysicists' love of truth seems no different from that of the classical philologist or the archive-oriented historian. All these people are trying hard to get something right. So, when it comes to that, are the master carpenter, the skilled accountant, and the careful dentist. The need to get it right is central to all these people's sense of who they are, of what makes their lives worthwhile. There is no reason to take the contributions of the scientific theorist to this substructure as having a moral or philosophical significance that is lacking in those of the artisan.

John Dewey thought that the fact that the mathematical physicist still enjoys greater prestige than the skilled mechanic is an unfortunate legacy of the Platonic-Aristotelian distinction between eternal truths and empirical truth, the elevation of leisured contemplation above sweaty practicality. His point might be restated by saying that the prestige of the scientific theorist is an unfortunate legacy of the Socratic idea that what we can all, as a result of rational debate, agree to be true is a reflection of something more than the fact of agreement -- the idea that intersubjective agreement under ideal communicative conditions is a token of correspondence to the way things really are.

The current debate among philosophers of mind and language over whether truth is a matter of correspondence to reality, and the parallel debate among philosophers of science over Kuhn's denial that science is asymptotically approaching the really real, are disputes between those who see empirical science as fulfilling at least some of Plato's hopes and those who think that those hopes should be abandoned. The former philosophers take it as a matter of unquestionable common sense that adding a brick to the edifice of knowledge is a matter of more accurately aligning thought and language with the way things really are. Their philosophical opponents take this so-called common sense to be merely what Dewey thought it: a relic of the religious hope that redemption can come from contact with something non-human and supremely powerful. To abandon the latter idea, the idea that links philosophy with religion, would mean acknowledging both the ability of scientists to add bricks to the edifice of knowledge and the practical utility of scientific theories for prediction while insisting on the irrelevance of both achievements to searches for redemption.

These debates among the philosophers have little to do with the activities of the second sort of people whom I have labeled "materialist metaphysicians". These are the scientists who think that the public at large should take an interest in the latest discoveries about the genome, or cerebral localization, or child development, or quantum mechanics. Such scientists are good at dramatizing the contrast between the old scientific theories and the shiny new ones, but they are bad at explaining why we should care about the difference. They vaguely imply that the new theories have somehow, for the first time, put us in touch with reality.

This rhetoric simply puts a glossy metaphysical varnish on a useful scientific product. It suggests that we have not only learned more about how to predict and control our environment and ourselves but also done something more -- something of redemptive significance. But the successive achievements of modern science exhausted their philosophical significance when they made clear that a causal account of the relations between spatio-temporal events did not require the operation of non-physical forces -- when it showed us that there are no spooks.

Modern science, in short, has helped us see that if you want a metaphysics, then a materialistic metaphysics is the only one to have. But it has not given us any reason to think that we need a metaphysics. The need for metaphysics lasted only as long as the hope for redemptive truth lasted. But by the time that materialism triumphed over idealism, this hope had waned. So the reaction of most contemporary intellectuals to gee-whiz announcements of new scientific discoveries is "So what?" This reaction is not, as C. P. Snow thought, a matter of pretentious and ignorant litterateurs condescending to honest, hard-working empirical inquirers. It is the perfectly sensible reaction of someone who wants to know about ends and is offered information about means.

Whereas both Plato's and Hegel's attempts to give us something more interesting than physics were laudable attempts to find a redemptive discipline to put in the place of religion, a materialist metaphysics is just physics getting above itself. Modern science is a gloriously imaginative way of describing things, brilliantly successful for the purpose for which it was developed -- namely, predicting and controlling phenomena. But it should not pretend to have the sort of redemptive power claimed by its defeated rival, idealist metaphysics.

We philosophers who are accused of not having sufficient respect for objective truth -- the ones whom the materialist metaphysicians like to call "postmodern relativists" -- think of objectivity as intersubjectivity. So we can happily agree that scientists achieve objective truth in a way that litterateurs do not, simply because scientists are organized into expert cultures in a way that literary intellectuals should not even try to organize themselves. You can have an expert culture if you agree on what you want to get, but not if you are wondering what sort of life you ought to desire. We know what purposes scientific theories are supposed to serve. But we are not now, and never will be, in a position to say what purposes novels, poems and plays are supposed to serve. For such books continually redefine our purposes.

LITERARY CULTURE AND POLITICS

So far I have said nothing about the relation of the literary culture to politics. I want to close by turning to that topic. For the quarrel between those who see the rise of the literary culture as a good thing and those who see it as a bad thing is largely a quarrel about what sort of high culture will do most to

create and sustain the climate of tolerance that flourishes best in democratic societies.

The strong point of those who think that a proper respect for objective truth, and thus for science, is important for sustaining a climate of tolerance and good will is that argument is essential to both science and democracy. Both when choosing between alternative scientific theories and when choosing between alternative pieces of legislation, we want people to base their decisions on arguments -- arguments that start from premises which can be made plausible to anyone who cares to look into the matter.

The priests rarely provided such arguments, nor do the literary intellectuals. So it is tempting to think of a preference for literature over science as a rejection of argument in favor of oracular pronouncements -- a regression to something uncomfortably like the pre-philosophical, religious, stage of Western intellectual life. Seen from this perspective, the rise of a literary culture looks like the treason of the clerks.

But those of us who rejoice in the emergence of the literary culture can counter this charge by saying that although argumentation is essential for projects of social cooperation, redemption is an individual, private, matter. Just as the rise of religious toleration depended on making a distinction between the needs of society and the needs of the individual, and on saying that religion was not necessary for the former, so the literary culture asks us to disjoin political deliberation from projects of redemption. This means acknowledging that their private hopes for authenticity and autonomy should be left at home when the citizens of a democratic society foregather to deliberate about what is to be done.

Making this move amounts to saying: the only way in which science is relevant to politics is that the natural scientists provide a good example of social cooperation, of an expert culture in which argumentation flourishes. They thereby provide a model for political deliberation -- a model of honesty, tolerance, and trust. This ability is a matter of procedure rather than results, which is why gangs of carpenters or teams of engineers can provide as good a model as do departments of astrophysics. The difference between reasoned agreement on how to solve a problem that has arisen in the course of constructing a bridge and reasoned agreement on what physicists sometimes call "a theory of everything" is, in this context, irrelevant. For whatever the last theory of everything tells us, it will do nothing to provide either political guidance or individual redemption.

The claim I have just made may seem arrogant and dogmatic, for it is certainly the case that some results of empirical inquiry have, in the past, made a difference to our self-image. Galileo and Darwin expelled various varieties of spooks by showing the sufficiency of a materialist account. They thereby made it much easier for us to move from a religious high culture to a secular, merely philosophical, one. So my argument on behalf of the literary culture depends on the claim that getting rid of spooks, of causal agency that does not supervene on the behavior of elementary particles, has exhausted the utility of natural science for either redemptive or political purposes.

I do not put this claim forward as a result of philosophical reasoning or insight, but merely as a prediction about what the future holds in store. A similar prediction led the philosophers of the eighteenth century to think that the Christian religion had done about all that it could for the moral condition of humanity, and that it was time to put religion behind us and to put metaphysics, either idealist or materialist, in its place.

When literary intellectuals assume that natural science has nothing to offer us except an edifying example of tolerant conversability, they are doing something analogous to what the *philosophes* did when they said that even the best of the priests had nothing to offer us save edifying examples of charity and decency. Reducing science from a possible source of redemptive truth to a model of rational cooperation is the contemporary analogue of the reduction of the Gospels from a recipe for attaining eternal happiness to a compendium of sound moral advice. That was the sort of reduction that Kant and Jefferson recommended, and that liberal Protestants of the last two centuries have gradually achieved.

To put this last point another way: both the Christian religion and materialist metaphysics turned out to be self-consuming artifacts. The need for religious orthodoxy was undermined by St. Paul's insistence on the primacy of love, and by the gradual realization that a religion of love could not ask everyone to recite the same creed. The need for a metaphysics was undermined by the ability of modern science to see the human mind as an exceptionally complex nervous system and thus to see itself in pragmatic rather than metaphysical terms. Science showed us how to see empirical inquiry as the use of this extra physiological equipment to gain steadily greater mastery over the environment, rather than as a way of replacing appearance with reality. Just as the eighteenth century became able to see Christianity not as a revelation from on high but as continuous with Socratic reflection, so the twentieth century became able to see natural science not as revealing the intrinsic nature of reality but as continuous with the sort of practical problem-solving that both beavers and carpenters are good at.

To give up the idea that there is an intrinsic nature of reality to be discovered either by the priests, or the philosophers, or the scientists, is to disjoin the need for redemption from the search for universal agreement. It is to give up the search for an accurate account of human nature, and thus for a recipe for leading The Good Life for Man. Once these searches are given up, expanding the limits of the human imagination steps forward to assume the role that obedience to the divine will played in a religious culture, and the role that discovery of what is really real played in a philosophical culture. But this substitution is no reason to give up the search for a single utopian form of political life -- the Good Global Society.

The literary culture can be as loyal an ally of democratic politics as the philosophical culture has been. It should not be seen as the triumph of the Counter-Enlightenment, but as a continuation of the Enlightenment by other, and better, means.

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Chapter VII

Global Ethics: Beyond Universalism and Particularism

Fred Dallmayr

These are unsettling times. Barely a decade after the end of the Cold War, the fury of violence has been unleashed around the world, now taking the form of terrorism, interminable warfare, and genocidal mayhem. There is no lack of cynical voices proclaiming that violence surely is nothing new and that humankind—a depraved species—invariably reaps the fate it deserves. Tempting as this message may be in dark moments, something in the human heart—something apparently not fully depraved—resists this counsel of despair. After all, despair too easily equals defeat: life itself, especially a life worth living, is denied when death and mayhem are granted the final word. Moreover, there may be another, more hopeful way of interpreting strife and conflict. In a formula made famous by Hegel, conflict between nations and peoples may also be the emblem of a properly human and even humanizing struggle: namely, the “struggle for recognition” from which participants will eventually emerge as relatively equal partners enjoying mutual understanding and respect.¹

The advantage of Hegel’s formula is that it avoids an abstract utopianism—without relinquishing hope for humanity. That a movement akin to Hegel’s trajectory has been happening in the world is something that even cynical “realists” can hardly deny. In the wake of two terribly destructive wars, the twentieth century saw the emergence of two international organizations—the League of Nations and the United Nations—which, though structurally flawed in many ways, marked the beginning consolidation of a legal rule system binding together the many countries of this globe. At the same time, the narrowly state-centered focus of these organizations was remedied or supplemented by more people-oriented agreements, especially the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (and a series of later, related documents). These and similar developments have engendered a widespread hope that humankind may now—or at least soon—be ready for the adoption of a global or cosmopolitan ethics seen as a framework buttressing and undergirding existing legal provisions. During the past several decades, many initiatives have been launched in this area by prominent theologians and philosophers—the former relying mainly (though not exclusively) on Judaeo-Christian teachings and the latter drawing inspiration chiefly from the traditions of Stoicism and natural law. The present paper seeks to explore and assess these initiatives. Proceeding in three steps, the paper first reviews major proposals for the formulation of a universal or global ethics, especially proposals sponsored by the German theologian Hans Kung, the Chinese philosopher Julia Ching and the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum. In a second step, attention

shifts to objections raised to a “top-down” universalism, objections having to do mainly with a perceived neglect of situated differences as well as of motivational resources. Accepting partly some of these objections, the conclusion of the paper moves the discussion to a political plane—arguing that a viable global ethics needs to be anchored in, or supplemented by, a global political *praxis*.

GLOBAL ETHICS

The hope for a global ethics is not ill-founded; nor is it simply the outgrowth of ongoing processes of globalization. In their respective ways, traditional religious and philosophical teachings have always subscribed to this hope. Broadly speaking one might say that religion addresses itself to the human heart, and philosophy to the human mind, without qualifications; that is, the appeal in both cases is non-exclusivist and hence potentially universal. In the case of religion (or at least many religions), this aspect is manifest in the tendency to support evangelization or the spreading of “good news” everywhere. Leaving aside occasional domineering gestures, this news certainly is not meant for a privileged few but is addressed *urbi et orbi*, that is, to people at all times and in all walks of life. The same outreach necessarily characterizes philosophy. If philosophy means the search for truth and wisdom (*sophia*), then this search cannot be restricted to a specific context, but has to be unconditional and remain open to arguments and queries raised at any time and from any quarter. At least since the time of Socrates—to take a Western example—philosophy has been firmly committed to this universal quest. Following the eclipse of Greece, the same quest was continued by Cynics and Stoics and later by medieval Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers. Among all philosophical orientations, modern Western philosophy is most strongly universalist in outlook. After Descartes had pinpointed the universal nature of the human mind (*cogito*), the subsequent Enlightenment—culminating in Kant—sought to spread the light of Cartesian reason around the world, in an effort of philosophical evangelization or dissemination.

Contemporary globalizing initiatives—on the part of both theologians and philosophers—thus can look back to a time-honored lineage or genealogy. In the religious or theological field, global endeavors have received a tremendous boost by the upsurge of inter-religious ecumenism, manifest prominently in inter-faith meetings and especially in the institution or consolidation of a “Parliament of the World’s Religions.” The first meeting of that Parliament—then still in embryonic form—had taken place in Chicago in 1893. To celebrate the centenary of that event, a second meeting of that Parliament was called and assembled in the same city in 1993—now with a vastly expanded list of participants. It was on that occasion that the assembled delegates (numbering more than six thousand) discussed and finally adopted a “Declaration Toward a Global Ethics,” a document meant to supplement and provide moral underpinnings for the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (of 1948). The document was initially drafted by the German theo-

gian Hans Kung who was considered amply qualified in light of his extensive previous engagement in inter-faith dialogues and in efforts to distill universally valid moral principles. More specifically, Kung was known for a number of pertinent publications and especially for his study (of 1991) titled *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethics*.²

Among his many writings, *Global Responsibility* is most helpful in providing insight into the normative-theoretical parameters of Kung's approach. Boldly programmatic, the book opens with these lapidary sentences: "No survival without a world ethic. No world peace without peace between the religions. No peace between the religions without dialogue between the religions." As can be seen, inter-faith ecumenism here functions as the premise and foundation for inter-human peace and harmony, and the latter as the premise for global survival. To underscore the urgency of the program, Kung—like many writers before him—appeals to the pervasive malaise of our time and especially to what is called the "crisis of the West" or "crisis of modernity." Manifest in many contemporary debacles, this crisis—he writes—is "a moral crisis of the West generally, including Europe: the destruction of any kind of tradition, of a wider meaning in life, of unconditional ethical criteria, and a lack of new goals, with the resultant psychological damage." To counteract these ills, the text counsels a strategy of moral revitalization—a kind of "moral rearmament"—which, in our global age, has to aim at the formulation of globally valid normative standards. In Kung's words: "The one world in which we live has a chance of survival only if there is no longer any room in it for spheres of differing, contradictory, and even antagonistic ethics. This one world needs *one* basic ethic." While not seeking to regulate human behavior in all details, such a basic ethic in his view presupposes a "minimal basic consensus" on values and norms among people around the world. The upshot of those considerations is that globalization cannot be limited to political, economic, and cultural domains, but must be above all a normative enterprise: "If ethics is to function for the wellbeing of all, it must be indivisible. The undivided world increasingly needs an undivided ethic."³

Programmatic statements of this kind are backed up—as they need to be—by supportive arguments. As befits a broadly trained author, these arguments are drawn from a variety of sources. Philosophically, major credit for the design of a universal ethic is given to Immanuel Kant—especially to that version of the categorical imperative which states that "human beings may never be made mere means" but "must remain an ultimate end." Among more recent philosophers and social thinkers, favorable mention is made of the "transcendental pragmatics" of Karl-Otto Apel and the "universal pragmatics" of Jurgen Habermas, while Max Weber and Hans Jonas are invoked as sponsors of a general "ethic of responsibility."⁴ For Kung the theologian, however, philosophical arguments—though valuable up to a point—cannot furnish an ultimate basis or warrant for moral norms. The more deeply one ventures into the ethical domain, he writes, the more questions are raised "about moral motivation" and about "the general validity and ultimate meaningfulness of norms as such." It is precisely at this point that religions have

their own contribution to make. Although leading us some steps along the way, what a secular-rational approach cannot accomplish is the most important thing: to “give a reason for the absoluteness and universality of ethical obligation.” At this point, Kung—in eloquent language—articulates his own ethical-theological creed:

The categorical quality of the ethical demand, the unconditioned nature of the ought, cannot be grounded by human beings who are conditioned in many ways, but only by that which is unconditional: by an Absolute which can provide an over-arching meaning and which embraces and permeates individual human nature and indeed the whole of human society. That can only be the ultimate, supreme reality . . . that primal ground, primal support, primal goal of human beings and the world that we call God.⁵

Although the outcome of many discussions and revisions, the “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic” adopted by the religious parliament in 1993 still shows clearly the inspiration of its drafter. Again, reference is made at the very outset to a pervasive malaise afflicting the contemporary world: a “fundamental crisis” affecting “global economy, global ecology, and global politics” and manifest in poverty, hunger, and “social, racial, and ethnic conflicts.” As an antidote to these problems, the Declaration postulates a “new global ethic” without which a new global order cannot arise or persist. Actually, in the view of the participants, the postulated ethic is “new” only in application, not in basic inspiration. “We affirm,” they stated, “that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, that these form the basis of a global ethic,” but that they have “yet to be lived in heart and action.” For the participants, the invoked core values constituted a “fundamental consensus on binding values,” in fact an “irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions.” An over-arching principle implicit in the postulated ethic is the demand that “every human being must be treated humanely,” which means: in accordance with the “inalienable and untouchable dignity” of all human beings. This principle, in turn, gives rise to four “irrevocable directives”: a global commitment to a culture of “non-violence and respect for life,” of “solidarity and a just economic order,” of “tolerance and a life of truthfulness,” and of “equal rights and partnership between men and women.” A main point where the Declaration departed from Kung’s *Global Responsibility* had to do with the explicit invocation of “God” as the absolute foundation of ethics. Sensitive to differences of religious belief (and especially to objections raised by representatives of Buddhism), the Declaration limited itself to appeals to an “ultimate reality” as the source of “spiritual power and hope.”⁶

As indicated before, theologians and religious leaders have not been alone in this search for a global ethics; with different accents—centerstaging the role of human reason—numerous contemporary philosophers have joined

them in this search. In the preceding discussion, brief reference was made to two German thinkers, Apel and Habermas, well known for their formulation of a universal (“communicative”) ethics. In the American context, their efforts have been paralleled by John Rawls, especially by the latter’s *A Theory of Justice* and related writings.⁷ For present purposes, attention shall be limited to a younger American philosopher: Martha Nussbaum. Although starting her career with a focus on ancient Greek tragedy and philosophy, Nussbaum more recently has turned to the legacy of enlightened rationalism—a legacy which she traces from Roman Stoicism via natural law to Immanuel Kant (and present-day Kantians).⁸ What, in her view, links classical Stoics with modern Enlightenment philosophy is not so much a shared cosmology or teleology, but rather a shared trust in the role of reason seen as the essential or defining feature of human beings—a trust which she finds to be under siege today. What renders both Stoics and Kantian rationalism relevant to our globalizing age is their ambition to transcend confining contexts and parochial interests and to keep their gaze fixed on that rational core which is shared by people at all times and in all places.

The elan of Nussbaum’s approach emerges clearly in an essay (of 1997) significantly titled “Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism.” The essay opens with a spirited attack on a host of postmodern or post-Nietzschean thinkers disdainful of enlightened reason. “Under the influence of Nietzsche,” she writes, “eminent thinkers of quite different sorts have felt dissatisfaction with a politics based on reason and principle,” and have tried to find an alternative paradigm “based less on reason and more on communal solidarity, less on principle and more on affiliation, less on optimism for progress than as a sober acknowledgement of human finitude and mortality.” Although acknowledging a broad range of post-Nietzschean approaches, Nussbaum detects in all of them a common denominator: “All agree in their opposition to a hopeful, active, and reason-based politics grounded in an idea of reverence for rational humanity wherever we find it.” This opposition structures intellectual alliances and, above all, a kind of philosophical friend-enemy demarcation: for all Nietzscheans, the “arch-foe” tends to be Immanuel Kant, because it was Kant who—more influentially than any other Enlightenment thinker—defended a politics “based upon reason rather than patriotism or group sentiment,” a politics “that was truly universal rather than communitarian,” one “that was active, reformist and optimistic rather than given to contemplating the horrors or waiting for the call of Being.” As Nussbaum makes it clear, the defense of reason was not Kant’s spontaneous invention, but was informed by a time-honored tradition stretching back to the Stoics. The basic aim of her essay is “to trace the debt Kant owed to ancient Stoic cosmopolitanism” and thus to establish a lineage of cosmopolitan thought. In our time ravaged by brutal wars and episodes of ethnic cleansing, this lineage provides a guidepost for a moral resurgence. As an antidote to the asserted ills of our age, Kant—and, through him, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, and especially Cicero—present us with “a challenge that is at once noble and practical.”⁹

In tracing the lineage between Stoics and Kant, Nussbaum does not claim a complete coincidence nor a heavy intellectual dependence. As she acknowledges, Kant discussed Stoic ideas “only in a brief and general way,” and much of his information seemed to derive from modern writings on natural law (influenced by Cicero and other Stoics). The main linkage resides in the idea of cosmopolitanism or world-citizenship which, first developed by the Stoics, became a centerpiece of Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*. The idea was launched by Diogenes the Cynic who, refusing to be defined by local or parochial bonds, declared himself to be “a citizen of the world.” For the Cynics and the Stoics following their lead, the basic moral quality of human beings resided in their affiliation with “rational humanity.” In Nussbaum’s account, the basis of a moral community in the Stoic view was “the worth of reason in each and every human being.” This reason was seen as “a portion of the divine in each of us,” with the result that “each and every human being, just in virtue of being rational and moral, has boundless worth.” Human rationality, for the Stoics, was also the basis of a genuine, morally grounded citizenship shared by all. In the words of Marcus Aurelius: “If reason is common, so too is law; and if this is common, then we are fellow citizens. If this is so, we share in a kind of organized polity, and if that is so, the world is as it were a city-state.” As one should realize, the “kind of polity” invoked by Marcus was not an actual government, but rather a moral association seen as a premise to, and yardstick for, any government. This association, in turn, required the presence of a general consensus on moral norms; as Nussbaum paraphrases this idea: as participants in the global community we must “conceive of ourselves as having common goals and projects with our fellows.” It was this moral conception that was taken over by Kant in his practical philosophy and in his comments on perpetual peace: “It is this deep core that Kant appropriates, the idea of a kingdom of free rational beings equal in humanity, each of them to be treated as an end no matter where in the world he or she dwells.”¹⁰

Views of this kind were further fleshed out by Nussbaum in subsequent writings, especially in her book *Cultivating Humanity*. Again, reference is made to Diogenes, now presented as a follower or disciple of Socrates for his habit of “disdaining external markers of status and focusing on the inner life of virtue and thought.” During the ensuing centuries, Stoic philosophers made Diogenes’ approach “respectable and culturally fruitful,” by developing the idea of cross-cultural study and by making the concept of the “world citizen” (*kosmou polites*) a cornerstone of their educational program. In Nussbaum’s presentation, good citizenship for Stoics meant to be a “citizen of the world,” and this for several reasons. For one thing, taking the attitude of world citizens enabled people better to solve problems arising in larger contexts (such as the context of the far-flung Roman empire). More importantly, however, the stance of world citizenship was “intrinsically valuable,” for it recognizes in people “what is especially fundamental about them, most worthy of reverence and acknowledgement”: to wit, “their aspirations to justice and goodness and their capacities for reasoning in this connection.” To be sure, Stoics for the most part did not simply dismiss differences between people or

local loyalties; in fact, knowledge of local situations was usually considered a precondition and corollary of the world citizen's ability to "discern and respect the dignity of humanity in each person." However, the main emphasis always had to be on commonality: on the essentially shared endowment of reason. Stoic education for world citizenship basically required "transcending the inclination of both students and educators to define themselves primarily in terms of local group loyalties and identities." Stoic insights of this kind were preserved in modern times in the natural law tradition and especially in the political thought of Kant; in this refined and updated form, they still can serve as directives for contemporary education on a global scale.¹¹

OBJECTIONS TO A TOP-DOWN UNIVERSALISM

Moral globalism—as presented above—surely has important merits. In a world torn asunder by multiple forms of strife, nothing seems more timely than to be reminded of our shared humanity and of the universal aspirations present in religious teachings and prominent philosophical traditions. Nussbaum's plea, in particular, for a cosmopolitan moral education no doubt deserves wide-spread attention and support. Yet, support needs to be qualified or tempered for several reasons. Rigidly maintained, emphasis on commonality or universality is likely to sideline morally relevant differences or distinctions; at the same time, the accent on normative rules tends to neglect or under-rate the role of concrete motivations. To some extent, issues of this kind surfaced at the religious parliament. Despite their shared religious commitments, delegates quarreled over the (possibly) "Western" bias of their document, apart from disagreeing on the sense of "ultimate reality" as well as a number of other questions.¹² Disputes are bound to be heightened in the philosophical domain (wedded to critical inquiry), revealing the intrinsic ambivalence of universalism. On the one hand, the postulate to treat all human beings as equal—by virtue of their shared capacity for reason—militates against invidious discrimination based on race, status, or gender. On the other hand, sameness of treatment is morally deficient by extending recognition to fellow beings only in the respect in which they are identical with ourselves. In an important way, such treatment still is egocentric in the sense that it appropriates or reduces the *alter* to the rational self (or ego), instead of recognizing the distinct otherness of fellow beings. As indicated, Nussbaum makes allowance for some human diversity; however, by defining reason as the universal human "essence," her account renders differences non-essential and hence marginal.

The dilemmas of universalism are not a recent discovery. In a sense, they were already discerned by Aristotle in his critique of Plato's "ideal" state. In the context of modern Western philosophy, major reservations were articulated by Hegel, especially in response to Kant's duty-centered moral universalism. These reservations were a persistent theme in Hegel's evolving *opus*. Already one of his early writings ("The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate") castigated the dualism inherent in Kant's thought between duty and inclina-

tion and between universality and particularity where the former “becomes the master and the particular the mastered.” The opposition could be overcome or at least mitigated, he argued, once attention is shifted from abstract duty to properly channeled inclination (in accord with biblical teachings). The critique of abstract universalism or formalism was continued in the *Philosophy of Right* where Kantian morality was not so much erased as integrated and “sublated” in the differentiated fabric of concrete ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*).¹³ Among recent students of Hegel, some of the philosopher’s complaints were renewed and re-articulated by Theodor W. Adorno, especially in his magisterial *Negative Dialectics*. In that study, Adorno took aim at the Kantian dichotomy between pure “inwardness” and external causality, between the abstract “autonomy” of moral reason and the causal conditioning of actual behavior. Kant, he writes, “tackles the dichotomy through the distinction between the pure and the empirical subject, neglecting the reciprocal mediation of these terms.” In this conception, the individual (or subject) is “unfree” by virtue of its subjection to empirical categories; at the same time, it is radically, even “transcendentally” free by virtue of its ability to “constitute” its rational identity. Instead of resorting to Hegelian synthesis, Adorno at this point introduces the notion of “non-identity” designating an excess over duty and particularity. The same thought is also phrased as an inclination or “impulse” reconciling inwardness and nature.¹⁴

Postmodernism

Still more recently, Hegel’s and Adorno’s reservations have been taken up and further radicalized by a group of contemporary thinkers often loosely grouped under the rubric of “postmodernism.” What unites these diverse thinkers is their opposition to “foundationalism,” which is another word for a homogenizing universalism. In the case of some writers—summarily denounced by Nussbaum as Nietzscheans or post-Nietzscheans—anti-foundational zeal takes the form of a radical reversal celebrating particularism or dissensus for its own sake; but matters are rarely that simple. A case in point is the work of Michel Foucault (often described as postmodern or “post-structuralist”). In his later writings, Foucault formulated a distinct ethical outlook—though one not based on abstractly universal principles but rather grounded in concretely situated practices or modes of conduct. The second volume of his *History of Sexuality* carefully distinguishes between “code morality” or a morality relying on formal rules and concrete moral conduct—the latter being further differentiated into actual conduct and motivational guidance. As he writes: “a rule of conduct is one thing; the conduct that may be governed by this rule is another. But another thing still is the manner in which (one thinks) one ought to conduct oneself,” that is, the manner in which one “forms oneself as an ethical subject” or agent. For a number of reasons (including his chosen focus on ancient Graeco-Roman morality), Foucault found it important and even necessary to concentrate on the practice of self-formation. Tellingly, he called this practice also “ethical work” (*travail éthique*), insisting that it is

not reducible to, or deducible from, a static code, but involves a process or movement: the attempt “to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behavior.” Although conduct usually involves some reference to moral rules, this is not sufficient to qualify the conduct itself as “moral” in the absence of self-formative practice. As Foucault elaborates;

The latter is not simply [inner] “self-awareness” but self-formation as an “ethical subject,” a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself.¹⁵

Moral conduct, in the Foucauldian sense, cannot be rigidly standardized, but is necessarily differentiated among individuals acting in different times and places; for—as he says—modes of self-formation “do not differ any less from one morality to another” than do systems of rules and interdictions. Curiously, Foucault’s later texts appeal precisely to the same set of mentors invoked by Nussbaum in her defense of universal rules: the Cynics and Stoics, and above all Diogenes the Cynic. Like Nussbaum’s writings, *The History of Sexuality* refers to the “scandalous” behavior of Diogenes and his habit of confounding public and private spheres of conduct. However, far from figuring as the exemplar of a universal reason captured in invariant rule systems, the accent here is placed on Diogenes as teacher of moral self-formation and “performance criticism”—a criticism directed at the homogenizing and “normalizing” rule systems of society. For the Cynic, self-formation was part of the morally required “practices of the self” summed up in the notion of “self-care” or “care of the self” (*epimeleia heautou*)—a notion which was subsequently elaborated by the Stoics (and which furnishes the title of the third volume of the *History*). As the grounding for moral practice, self-care cannot be entirely governed or determined by either physical or societal laws. Like Martin Heidegger before him, Foucault acknowledged freedom as the premise and springboard of moral action. As he stated in an interview given shortly before his death, titled “The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom” (1984), freedom has to be seen as the “ontological condition” of human being-in-the-world and as the basis of ethics—where ethics denotes not so much a theory or a codified set of rules but rather a practice or way of life (*ethos*). As he added (to obviate misunderstanding), self-care in this context is not an emblem of egocentrism or narrow particularism, but rather a practice always conducted in a concrete context—with the result that “this *ethos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others.”¹⁶

From a different angle, the notion of a differentiated ethics not subsumable under universal rules has also been developed by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, especially in his *Postmodern Ethics*. Seconding and in part

transgressing Foucault, Bauman argues for a “morality without ethical code,” in fact for a morality without universalism and foundational banisters. As he writes: “Only rules can be universal. One may legislate universal rule-dictated *duties*, but moral *responsibility* exists solely in interpellating the individual and being carried individually.” Sharply put: “One may say that the moral is what *resists* codification, formalization, socialization, universalization.” What traditionally had served as universal banisters were the concepts of “human reason” and rational “human nature”—concepts which have lost their cogency in our postmodern times which have robbed modernity of its “illusions.” For Bauman, such disillusionment prompts morality to rupture the “stiff armor” of ethical codes and to “re-personalize” itself, that is, to return to “the starting point of the ethical process”: the “primary ‘brute fact’ of moral impulse, moral responsibility, and moral intimacy” which basically cannot be regulated or prescribed.

Despite certain similarities with the Foucauldian approach, one may also note significant divergences. While Foucault’s later texts rely on self-care and human autonomy, Bauman resorts to a kind of heteronomy inspired by the teachings of Emmanuel Levinas, namely, to the primacy of “otherness” as stimulus of morality and hence to an “asymmetry” of moral practice. Morality here means a being “for the Other,” an “encounter with the Other as face” which begets “an essentially *unequal* relationship.” Occasionally, postmodern zeal tempts Bauman to adopt a strategy of reversal or counter-enlightenment—a move which Foucault would hardly have endorsed. “From the perspective of ‘rationale order,’” he writes, “morality is and is bound to be *irrational*.” The enterprise of rational rule-governance always tends to regard the recalcitrance of the moral impulse as “a scandal,” as “the germ of chaos and anarchy inside order.” Under postmodern auspices, however, morality is finally “free to admit its non-rationality: its being its own (necessary and sufficient) reason.”¹⁷

Feminism

Apart from postmodern initiatives, moral non-universalism or anti-universalism has also been defended by prominent feminist thinkers in recent times. A widely known and discussed exemplar is the psychologist Carol Gilligan, author of *In a Different Voice*. Reacting against doctrines of moral development wedded to (neo-Kantian) universal principles, Gilligan complained about the widespread “exclusion of women” from the prevalent frameworks of psychological research (an exclusion which was more paradigmatic than purely gender-based). Typically, developmental studies were conducted with young boys and championed a model of moral stages leading from infancy to higher and higher levels of impartiality, fairness, and concern with rule-governed justice. This model was particularly evident in the work of Lawrence Kohlberg—a leading figure in developmental studies—whose theory of six moral stages basically traced a process of increasing decontextualization and universalization. Seen from the vantage of this model, women or girls were

largely “deviant” cases whose deviance could only be corrected by their re-fashioning “out of masculine cloth.” For Gilligan, this approach is both empirically skewed and difference-blind—especially blind to differences arising in social contexts which “shape the experiences of males and females and the relationship between the sexes.” In modern contexts, numerous factors contribute to differences in identity formation, with male gender identity typically being more tied to abstract, decontextualized rules and female identity to concrete personal attachments. Following other feminists, Gilligan prefers to regard women’s presumed “weakness”—their lack of abstract judgment—as a different kind of “moral strength” manifest in the cultivation of responsibilities and the “ability to care.” Viewed from this angle, a model of development emerges distinct from that of Kohlberg (as well as Freud and Jean Piaget): one in which morality resides in the “activity of care” rather than the contest over rights and rules and which requires “a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract.”¹⁸

Transcultural

In a more philosophical vein, a loosely parallel argument has been advanced by the French feminist thinker Luce Irigaray. As she observes in her recent book *Between East and West*, our time desperately needs a differential ethics—one which does not so much cancel universality as rather suffuse general discourse with recognition of diverse idioms or voices. “All attraction,” she writes, echoing Gilligan, “is founded upon a difference, an ‘unknown’ of the desiring subject, beginning with what pushes the boy and the girl, the man and the woman toward each other.” What is important and distinctive about Irigaray is that she extends the argument to the global or cross-cultural level. The differential relation between the genders, she adds, can serve as a “relational paradigm” for the ordering of society on all levels; to this extent, respecting the difference of genders “without reducing the two to the one, to the same, to the similar . . . represents a universal way for attaining the respect of other differences.” Differential respect of this kind is particularly crucial in our globalizing era where peoples and cultures are thrown together and treated either as separate identities or subsumed under a uniform category—leaving no room for “between-traditions.” Western thought, in particular, has traditionally not been very hospitable to differential respect, given the ingrained bent to transform everything “into abstract categories as soon as possible”: linguistic rules, legal norms, philosophical and scientific concepts. This background calls for a major re-thinking or reorientation, pointing to a different relation to the world and others:

Where we have learned to control nature, it would be a matter of learning to respect it. Where the ideal has been presented to us as the absorption of the whole in an absolute, it would be a matter of recognizing the merit of insurmountable limits. Where respect for the same stretched, vertically,

from the son to the Father-God and, horizontally, to the universal community of men, it would be important from now on to know how to intertwine love of the same and love of the other, faithfulness to self and becoming with the other, a safeguard of the identical and similar for the meeting with the different.¹⁹

As one should add, Irigaray does not simply applaud differential respect in a general way, but concretely practices it in her personal engagement in cross-cultural relations (at the cusp “between-traditions”). Her book contains thoughtful and probing comments on “Eastern teachings,” with a focus on Hindu and Buddhist traditions (including yoga and Tantra); as she tries to make clear, ancient teachings and practices in the East often paid closer attention than is customary in the modern West to the differential entwinement—beyond fusion and separation—of all beings and phenomena.²⁰ The argument could be extended to the Far East, especially to Confucianism (not discussed in her book). As is well known, Confucian ethics is not rule-governed but relational, and more specifically grounded in five crucial relationships: those of husband and wife, parent and child, older and younger sibling, ruler and minister, and friend and friend. Critics have often charged these relationships as reflecting a rigid hierarchy or mode of subordination; but, although possible as deformations, the latter features do not define their character. As Tu Wei-ming has pointed out, the relations should be seen as a web of “dyadic” linkages—where “dyadic” resonates with Irigaray’s differential respect. In each relationship, there are “selves” mutually constituting and respecting each other in their difference or dyadic nexus which can never be fully stabilized or exhausted. Tu Wei-ming also takes exception to the charge of Confucian complicity in status hierarchy (perhaps even patriarchy). As he notes, the ethical spirit undergirding the five relations is not dependency but mutuality or reciprocity (*pao*). In this connection, friendship is the relation *par excellence* as it is based on mutual trust and care. In fact, in friendship self-care and care for other are in balance:

The authentic approach is neither a passive submission to structural limitations nor a Faustian activation of [inner] freedom but a conscientious effort to make the dynamic interaction between them a fruitful dialectic of self-realization and transformation.²¹

GLOBAL ETHICS AND GLOBAL POLITICAL PRAXIS

What the preceding initiatives—whether postmodern, feminist or transcultural—have thrown into relief is a “deficit” plaguing moral universalism: namely, the neglect or deemphasis of concrete motivation and moral self-formation. As one should note, the issue is not simply the slighting of difference as particularity (which, as such, might still be subsumable under

universal rules); nor is it the disregard of moral “inwardness” (which still obeys the dualism of inner duty and external constraint). The issue is more serious and has to do with the privileging of moral *theory* over *praxis*, that is, of principles over moral conduct and self-formation grounded in freedom. The notion of *praxis*, however, brings to the fore a domain usually shunned or sidelined by universalist morality: the domain of politics. This domain is unavoidable given the quandaries of moral rules. Even assuming widespread acceptance of universal norms, we know at least since Aristotle that rules do not directly translate into *praxis*, but require careful interpretation and application. At this point, eminently political questions arise: who has the right of interpretation? And in case of conflict: who is entitled to rule between different interpretations? This right or competence cannot simply be left to “universal” theorists or intellectuals—in the absence of an explicit *political* delegation or empowerment. These considerations indicate that it is insufficient—on moral and practical grounds—to throw a mantle of universal rules over humankind without paying simultaneous attention to public debate and the role of political will-formation. This caveat is particularly important in our globalizing era where universalism often shades over into the policies of hegemonic and quasi-imperial powers. Viewed from a non-political angle, can universal rules (as theories) not operate indifferently under the aegis of *pax Romana*, of *pax Britannica*, and (perhaps) *pax Americana*?

The sidelining of politics by morality is manifest in many cosmopolitan writings; Nussbaum herself is candid about her priorities. In discussing Kant’s debt to Stoic cosmopolitanism, she writes, “I have started from the moral core of their ideas about reason and personhood,” while leaving aside the “superficial” aspects of “institutional and practical goals.” It was this “deep core” that Kant appropriated in his idea of a “kingdom of ends” which signaled a “common participation in a virtual polity,” irrespective of the presence or absence of an actual polity. Paraphrasing the Stoic distinction between a merely local or mundane and a transmundane community, she insists that “we should give our first moral allegiance to *no* mere form of government, no temporal power,” but rather should give it to “the moral community made up by the humanity of all human beings.” Virtualization of politics characterized the behavior of most ancient Cynics. Thus, Diogenes the Cynic is described as an “exile” from his city who paid little heed to “political thought” and adopted a “strikingly apolitical” stance. With the exception of Cicero (more Aristotelian in outlook), most Roman Stoics followed the Cynics’ example, even if they held public office. As we know, Seneca was a minister under the emperor Nero—certainly not a model of civic engagement and responsibility. And despite his wisdom and commitment to justice, emperor Marcus Aurelius showed little or no concern for the political freedom and will-formation of citizen and non-citizens in his far-flung empire. In fact, Stoic theorizing often coincided with the acceptance of oppressive political practices, including slavery. Again, Nussbaum is appealingly candid, as when she writes:

The Stoics did not and could not conclude, as Kant does,

that colonial conquest is morally unacceptable. Cicero tries to moralize the Roman imperial project—but without much success. Seneca certainly could not have uttered such sentiments had he had them, and Marcus focuses on the task of managing the existing empire as justly and wisely as he can, rather than on the question whether he ought not instead to dismantle it.²²

In contrast to Stoic leanings, modern cosmopolitans—especially cosmopolitan democrats—need not be content with the virtualization of politics and public participation. In this respect, they can draw support from the writings of the later Foucault, especially his linkage of moral self-care and free political *praxis*. As indicated before, Foucault offers a somewhat different account of Stoicism and classical cosmopolitanism. In his *The Care of the Self*, he opposes the bifurcation between participation in a corrupt local polity and withdrawal into a universal realm of ideas. Although late-Roman life was often polarized into the options of participation and retreat, the situation on the ground tended to be more complex and not reducible to a waning of politics in favor of an ethics of withdrawal: “It was a matter of elaborating an ethics that enabled one to constitute oneself as an ethical subject with respect to these social, civic, and political activities, in the different forms they might take.” This assessment is buttressed by a reading of late-Roman and Hellenistic records which point not only to the erection of overarching imperial structures, but also to a revitalization of local and urban politics. From this angle, city life with its institutional structures, its interests and struggles, did not simply disappear as a result of the widening context in which it was placed: the people of the Hellenistic period “did not have to flee from ‘the cityless world of the great empires’ for the very good reason that ‘Hellenism was a world of cities’.” These comments shed a new light on late-Roman morality—and also on Foucault’s own formulation of “care of the self.” As he writes, the Stoic notion of self-care is often interpreted as an alternative to civic activity and political responsibility; and—he acknowledges—there were indeed currents recommending that people “turn aside from public affairs” with its troubles and passions. However, it is possible to construe things differently, such that self-care and the art of self-rule “becomes a crucial political factor.” In any case, it is not in opposition to public life that self-cultivation places its values and practices: “It is much more concerned to define the principle of a relation to self that will make it possible to set the forms and conditions in which political action, participation in the offices of power, the exercise of a [public] function, will be possible or not possible, acceptable or necessary.”²³

Drawing on both Foucauldian and Aristotelian teachings, Nussbaum’s moral (or moralizing) cosmopolitanism has been ably criticized by Peter Euben. Going back to the time of the Cynics and Stoics, Euben carefully weighs the merits and demerits of their teachings. Concurring with Nussbaum, he acknowledges the “impressive contributions” Cynics and Stoics made to “the ideas of human dignity, moral equality, and natural law.” Their rejection of

parochial customs and status distinctions and their ideal of world citizenship, he writes, have provided “a ground for the critique of slavery, ethnocentrism, and hierarchies of all kinds, critiques that have hardly lost their salience.” This, however, is only one side of the ledger; the other is the relative atrophy of political *praxis* among Nussbaum’s mentors. Although claiming to follow the Socratic model, Cynics and Stoics tended to lose “the Socratic tension between city as place and philosophy, which in their hands became a simple opposition.” In contrast to Socrates and especially to Aristotle, many Stoics dismissed the linkage between public authority and the “voice of the city” in favor of “right reason” as a general principle; in doing so, they encouraged the transformation or streamlining of political philosophy into “moral philosophy and political moralism.” This transformation, in turn, had a profound effect on civic freedom as understood by Aristotle—where freedom meant “an experience of acting with others in the public realm” and not simply “the sovereignty of unencumbered individuals who had ‘freed’ themselves of relationships and public affairs.” Euben also notes a certain deceptiveness in Stoic universalism, namely, a political exclusion inhabiting their principle of inclusion. Notwithstanding the espousal of universal citizenship, Stoicism in fact sponsored “a new exclusiveness based on differential commitment to and practice of rationality”—a distinction based on the realization that only “very few exceptional humans could be full members in the [Stoic] community of reason.”²⁴

These considerations carry over into Nussbaum’s account and her attempt to revitalize Stoicism for our time. As Euben points out, cosmopolitanism in Nussbaum’s portrayal is basically a posture of “exile,” a method of withdrawal from local/parochial attachments or entanglements. To be sure (as indicated above), her outlook does not entirely dismiss local loyalties and cultural differences; however, given her essentialist bent, these features are bound to remain marginal in comparison with “rationally justified” affiliations: “Our ‘fundamental’ obligations come from what is fundamental about us, and what is fundamental about us is reason.” Again, it is not a matter of slighting her moral ideals; for who could object to a desire for “justice, rights, reason, and morality in the world”? Euben’s worries go in a different direction. “There is something parochial about this cosmopolitanism,” he writes pointedly: “In the broadest terms, what is missing is politics including any political analysis of the nature of her moral critique”—in particular of the danger of a Stoic-like “accommodation to reigning structures of power.” In our time, the latter danger is real and pressing, especially in view of widespread political apathy, cynicism, and indifference. Given this situation, Euben offers a recommendation which is nearly the obverse of Stoic exile. As he states, the problem today is that nothing seems to take hold, **that deeply held preferences** are rare, and that only the immediately satisfied self-regarding ones are deemed worth embracing in a system hostile to larger democratic initiatives. Under these circumstances, Nussbaum’s cosmopolitan universalism may make things worse by promoting a dialectic between increasing withdrawal and self-righteous interventions.

Unsurprisingly, Nussbaum does not have “much to say about democracy”—a silence which is ominous in our globalizing context where hegemonic power structures may utilize an abstract universalism/moralism as a way of aborting “potentially democratizing commitments.” And is there not ample reason to be concerned about hegemonic globalization “especially if, as seems to be the case, the hidden premise of global unity is American popular culture?”²⁵

There is much that one can learn from Euben’s judicious discussion, especially from his effort to keep morality and politics together (without fusion, but also without separation).²⁶ In our contemporary globalizing context, what could be more urgent than to cultivate the virtues of cosmopolitanism and the principles of (what used to be called) “*ius gentium*”? Faced with ethnic conflicts and looming “clashes of civilizations,” humankind is called upon to develop a global ethics and civic culture sturdy enough to stem the tide of violence and destruction. To be properly cosmopolitan, this civic culture needs to be as inclusive as possible, that is, to embrace not only people similar to “us” but precisely those who are different or “other”—potentially even those who now are categorized (rashly) as “enemies.” At the same time and for the same motives, it is important to remedy the “deficit” of global moralism: its tendential neglect of politics; and the remedy has to be equally sturdy. As indicated before, it is insufficiently moral—in fact, it is hardly moral at all—to celebrate universal values everywhere without also seeking to enable and empower people in their different settings and locations. Although moral norms and theories may be universal in reach, moral *praxis* has a differential texture, especially when viewed from the angle of global justice. Simply put: promotion of justice—that is, the removal of misery and oppression—falls more heavily on the rich and powerful than it does on the poor, the oppressed, and the subaltern. In the case of the latter, nurturing morality—including cosmopolitan virtue—requires first of all an enabling and emancipatory strategy aimed at securing a measure of freedom and self-governance. “Cultivating humanity” thus is a bifocal, moral-political enterprise. Quite possibly, Nussbaum in the end might agree with this conclusion. As she writes, in closing her essay on Kant and cosmopolitanism: at some point it becomes important “to stop contemplating and to act, doing something useful for the common good.”²⁷

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NOTES

1. The idea of a “struggle for recognition” goes back to Hegel’s *Phenomenology* where the process is described, somewhat darkly or starkly, as a “struggle of life and death.” See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 229-240. In an attenuated form, the idea of mutual recognition has been taken up and devel-

oped by Charles Taylor, especially in “The Politics of Recognition” in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 25-73.

2. Hans Kung, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (New York: Crossroad, 1991). For the text of the “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic” see Hans Kung and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds., *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World’s Religions* (New York: Continuum, 1995). In the latter text, Kung provides comments on the “history, significance and method” of the Declaration (pp. 43-76), while Kuschel traces the historical development of the Parliament of the World’s Religions from 1893 to 1993 (pp. 77-105). Compare also Marcus Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope: One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).

3. Kung, *Global Responsibility*, pp. xv-xvi, 9, 28, 35. Curiously, Kung adds (p. 35): “Postmodern men and women need common values, goals, ideals, visions.” Despite the congruence of the idea of an “undivided” or universal ethics with central postulates of “modern” Western philosophy, the text repeatedly associates itself with a “postmodern” outlook—whose character, however, remains ambivalent and amorphous (being linked with such phenomena as feminism, post-industrialism, and post-colonialism, pp. 3-4, 17-20).

4. *Global Responsibility*, pp. 30, 32, 42. Specific references are made to Apel, *Diskurs und Verantwortung* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1988); Habermas, *Moralbewusstsein und kommunikatives Handeln* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1983); Weber, “Politik als Beruf,” in *Gesammelte politische Schriften* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1958), pp. 505-560; and Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1984). Turning against the critics of a transcendental-universal approach, Kung observes (p. 43): “Those who want to dispense with a transcendent principle have to follow a long path of horizontal communication with the possibility that, in the end, they have just been going round in a circle.”

5. Kung, *Global Responsibility*, pp. 51, 53. As he adds confidently (p. 87): “Religion can unambiguously demonstrate why morality, ethical values and norms must be unconditionally binding (and not just where it is convenient for me) and thus universal (for all strata, classes, and races). Precisely in this way the *humanum* is rescued by being seen to be grounded in the *divinum*.”

6. *A Global Ethic*, pp. 14, 17, 19, 21-23, 36. Regarding the objections raised by Buddhist representatives see Kung’s commentary, pp. 61-65.

7. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). In some subsequent writings Rawls has toned down or qualified the universalism of his early work. Regarding Apel and Habermas compare Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr, eds., *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

8. For some of Martha Nussbaum's earlier writings see *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

9. Nussbaum, "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 5 (1997), pp. 1-3.

10. "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism," pp. 4-5, 7-8, 10, 12. For the reference to Marcus Aurelius see *The Meditations*, trans. G. M. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), IV: 4; for the Kant reference see *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (2nd ed.; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 93-130.

11. Nussbaum, "Citizens of the World," in *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 52, 56-57, 59-61, 67. Nussbaum (p. 67) adds an attack on "difference politics" or "identity politics" (paralleling her cited attack on Nietzscheans): "Frequently, groups who press for the recognition of their group think of their struggle as connected with goals of human respect and social justice. And yet their way of focusing their demands, because it neglects commonalities and portrays people as above all members of identity groups, tends to subvert the demand for equal respect and love, and even the demand for attention to diversity itself." Compare also Nussbaum, *In Defense of Universal Values* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

12. For these disagreements see *A Global Ethics*, pp. 70, 94-96. In the words of Kuschel (p. 83): "The assessment that the 1893 Parliament was still shaped by 'a strong dose of Anglo-Saxon triumphalism' may also be true."

13. G.W.F. Hegel, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. 212-215; *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 75-79. Nussbaum does refer to the role of inclinations (under the rubric of "passions"), but without drawing implications for the primacy of universalism.

14. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), pp. 226, 236-237. For a somewhat inadequate translation see *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), pp. 229, 240-241. Compare also my "The Politics of Nonidentity: Adorno, Postmodernism, and Edward Said," in *Alternative Visions: Paths in the Global Village* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), pp. 47-69.

15. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), pp. 26-28. Compare also his portrayal of moral practices or "arts of existence" as "those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria."

16. *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 28, 54-55, 73; vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). See also “The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault on January 29, 1984,” trans. J. D. Gauthier, in James Bernauer and David Rasmussen, ed., *The Final Foucault* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 4-7.

17. Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 13, 31, 34-36, 48, 54. On the relation between Foucault and Levinas see Barry Smart, “Foucault, Levinas, and the Subject of Responsibility,” in Jeremy Moss, ed., *The Later Foucault* (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), pp. 78-92. On this issue, I am drawn to Paul Ricoeur’s balanced position (inspired by Aristotle); see my “Oneself as Another: Paul Ricoeur’s ‘Little Ethics,’” in *Achieving Our World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 171-188.

18. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 2, 6, 16-17, 19. Among other feminist writers, the study refers especially to Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Regarding Kohlberg see his “Stage and Sequence,” in David A. Goslin, ed., *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), and “From Is to Ought,” in Theodore Mischel, ed., *Cognitive Development and Epistemology* (New York: Academic Press, 1971), pp. 151-236; also Habermas, “Moral Development and Ego Identity,” in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp. 69-94.

19. Luce Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, trans. Stephen Pluhacek (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 136-137, 139-141. Irigaray’s arguments had been prepared in some of her earlier studies, especially *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1993), and *I Love to You*, trans. Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1995).

20. Thus, she writes: “The Vedas, the Upanishads, and Yoga have for their principal function to assure the articulation between the instant and immortality or eternity.... The Vedic gods, the Brahmins, and the yogis care about the maintenance of the life of the universe and that of their body as cosmic nature.... What I wish to see become from these ancient texts, alas too neglected in our Western(ized) teaching, is that love come to pass between two freedoms.” *Between East and West*, pp. 31, 63.

21. Tu Wei-ming, “Neo-Confucian Religiosity and Human Relatedness,” in *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 138-139, 145-146. Compare also his essay “The ‘Moral Universal’ from the Perspectives of East Asian Thought,” in the same volume, pp. 19-34.

22. Nussbaum, “Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism,” pp. 4, n. 11, 5, 8, 12, 14; and “Citizens of the World,” in *Cultivating Humanity*, pp. 52, 57, 59-60. The sidelining of politics in favor of morality was also clearly evident in

the deliberation of the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993; see in this respect *A Global Ethics*, pp. 54, 56.

23. Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, pp. 82, 86, 89, 94. As he adds, displaying admirable (nearly Aristotelian) good judgment (p. 93): "The basic attitude that one must have toward political activity was related to the general principle that whatever one is, it is not owing to the rank one holds, to the responsibility one exercises, to the position in which one finds oneself—above or beneath other people. What one is, and what one needs to devote one's attention to as to an ultimate purpose, is the expression of a principle that is singular in its manifestation within each person, but universal by the form it assumes in everyone, and collective by the community bond it establishes between individuals. Such is, at least for the Stoics, human reason as a divine principle present in all of us."

24. Peter Euben, "The Polis, Globalization, and the Politics of Place," in Aryeh Botwinick and William E. Connolly, eds, *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 266, 268-270. As he adds, highlighting the political effects of exclusiveness (p. 270): "Stoicism denied in practice the radical political possibilities of its philosophical commitments. Even when the Stoic ideal of virtuous and capable man was not primarily defined in political terms, it proved, nonetheless, especially congenial to monarchical and personal rule. Its leveling potential remained abstract, because (especially) early Stoics frequently refused to relate their thinking to the political and material conditions in which men lived their daily lives."

25. "The Polis, Globalization, and the Politics of Place," pp. 271-274. Soberly Euben continues (p. 274): "This is not to claim that cosmopolitanism is necessarily ethnocentric, but to caution against the unobtrusive ways in which dominant particulars represent themselves as the universal and actually become them in the sense of being the point of reference in relation to which others recognize themselves as particular."

26. In his words (p. 270): "The challenge is to keep the critical moral edge of cosmopolitanism *and* the political focus of the polis in tension." Euben also adopts the notion of "parallel polis," articulated by Vaclav Havel and Adam Michnik, as "a way of naming the places within civil society where participatory opportunities existed that were otherwise denied by mendacious regimes" (p. 282).

27. Nussbaum, "Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism," p. 25. On bifocal justice see my "'Rights' versus 'Rites': Justice and Global Democracy" in *Alternative Visions: Paths in the Global Village* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), pp. 253-276.

Part II

The Confucian Tradition

Chapter VIII

New Confucianism and Problems of Interpretation

Yelena Staburova

This paper endorses a critical analysis of a widely recognized intellectual movement, New Confucianism, from the perspective of its concepts, stages of development and limitations. It concludes that at present the main target of the New Confucianism to make a synthesis between Chinese and Western philosophies is impossible to achieve due to the inherent logic of the Western and Chinese philosophies.

NEW CONFUCIANISM: IN HARMONY WITH TIME

New Confucianism as a specific term came into being in the nineteen fifties. Being known only to a narrow group of philosophers, it seemed quite natural that Confucianism as a research issue has been “closed” by Guy Alitto, when in 1979, he published a book on Liang Shouming whom he labeled “the last Confucian”.¹

In the second part of the twentieth century Confucianism in PRC has been replaced by Marxism-Leninism, and in Taiwan, Singapore, Hongkong by various theories of industrial and post-industrial society which came like heavy waves. Both sides simultaneously denied and absorbed Confucianism. It seemed that there was no place anymore for the proper Confucianism, because it had been incorporated into more progressive and perspective intellectual environments.

The development of the term “New Confucianism” in the eighties was something unexpected, even for professionals. Like music, the words sound nicely. As literature, the two opposite notions, “New” and “Confucianism”, when put together gave birth to a plot. But let us see them at face value, for the words are also like commodities and according to the outmoded Marxist thesis, commodities might turn into money. Words are also like a hope for the future when, again according to Marx, human beings would demolish states and cultural borders and enjoy the happiness of a commonwealth. Thus, the words are also like Utopia.

The words are so attractive, that there is no wonder that during recent years New Confucianism became a highly influential mode of discussion in scholarly circles. For philosophers it is an especially promising field of studies. New Confucianism is highly esteemed as corresponding with “modernities”, “world village”, “globalization” – and all such theories of modern scholarly discourse.

CONTENT OF NEW CONFUCIANISM

The term “New Confucianism” (also “Contemporary Confucianism”, “Twentieth Century Confucianism” or, as A. Lomanov puts, “Post-Confucianism”²) from the very beginning has been used outside PRC borders: in Taiwan, colonial Hongkong and the USA. It was there that this intellectual movement has been defined as a specific phenomenon with common features, goals and similar methods. Nevertheless thinkers from PRC also have been included in its framework. Even more, it appeared that the founders of New Confucianism lived and worked in the PRC: Xiong Shili, Feng Youlan, Liang Shouming. The term “New Confucianism” is not a formal name, but reflects rather precisely two central ideas. “Confucianism” indicates faithfulness to the main Chinese school of thought. The word “New” shows that this faithfulness expresses itself in a new way, never before encountered. The exponents of this intellectual movement are new people who came during the twentieth century. Through Western schools of academic or personal experience. For some of them it was only an episode in their biographies, for others – the mainstream of their lives: Feng Youlan, for example, studied at Columbia University; Xiong Shili, participated in revolutionary activities under slogans of democracy and freedom; Du Weiming is a professor of Harvard University.

From the very beginning their attitude towards Confucianism was somehow different from those of Chinese intellectuals who developed traditional thought before the twentieth century. This attitude has been influenced by their Western experience. The principal distinction between philosophers of the past and contemporary New Confucians was that there was an element of arbitrary choice in their concern as those estranged from the Chinese culture proper consciously made their choice in favour of China.

One content of Confucianism has changed. In the twentieth century a distinction between different Chinese schools of thought which had been relevant in the earlier times became less important, and was replaced by a cultural unity. The process of mutual convergence concerned even such schools like Ru (more precise word for what is usually called “Confucianism”), Dao, Buddhism, including the more specific branches. All together they gained a common name of “Confucianism” or in Chinese of “Ru learning”. Hence, when we appeal to New Confucianism we mean Chinese cultural heritage considered as a whole where different schools are united on a common ground.

It is also important to recognize that New Confucianism does not exist as a sole entity, which can be studied only, so to speak, in its own right and in its own terms. To a great extent it appeared as a response to a challenge from the West, and as an alternative in a long-lasting discussion on which is better.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CONFUCIANISM

According to Liu Shuxian, it is now time for a third generation of New Confucians to whom he himself belongs. He maintains:

Even though mainstream Chinese thought in the twentieth century has condemned the Chinese tradition altogether, that tradition never completely died out. In fact the most creative talents were found in the contemporary New Confucian movement, which sought to bring about a synthesis between East and West. Among those who stayed on the mainland, Fung Yu-lan [Feng Yulan] (1895-1990) and Ho Lin [He Lin] (1902-1992) changed their earlier views after the Communist takeover, but Liang Sou-ming [Liang Souming, also – Liang Shouming] (1893-1988) and Hsiung Shih-li [Xiong Shili] (1885-1968) kept some of their beliefs. Ch'ien Mu [Qian Mu] (1895-1990) and Tang Chün-i [Tang Junyi] (1909-1978) moved to Hong Kong and Thomé H. Fang [Fang Dongmei] (1899-1976), Hsü Fu-kuan [Xu Fuguang] (1903-1982) and Mou Tsung-san [Mou Zongsan] (1909-1995) moved to Taiwan, where they exerted profound influence on younger scholars. Today contemporary New Confucianism is still a vital intellectual movement in Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas; it is even studied in Mainland China. [...] The New Confucian philosophical movement in the narrower sense derived inspiration from Hsiung Shih-li. Among his disciples the most original thinker is Mou Tsung-san [...]. But the so called third generation has a much broader scope; it includes scholars with varied backgrounds such as Yu Ying-shih [Yu Yingshi] (1930-), Liu Shu-hsien [Liu Shuxian] (1934-) and Tu Wei-ming [Du Weiming] (1940-), whose ideas have impact on intellectuals at large and whose selected writings³ have recently been allowed to be published on the mainland.³

The “third generation” having a Chinese background, in everyday life uses English, and, what is more, conceptually and lexically are included in Western intellectual discourse. It seems that further development of New Confucianism will be carried in the direction of a reduction of “Confucianism” proper, with accent on a “new” which is supposed to be not so much “new”, as “Western-like”.

Such a conclusion could be drawn from a comparison of the vocabulary, the problems discussed and the modes of argumentation in the works of Xiong Shili – who according to Liu Shuxian belongs to the first generation of New Confucians, Mou Zongsan – representing the second generation, and Liu Shuxian himself. The differences are obvious: in contrast to Xiong Shili,

who was developing his teaching on the Chinese cultural field with the help of Chinese philosophical language, even visually building his texts following classical patterns, Mou Zongsan much more broadly borrowed his ideas from the West. Liu Shuxian, Du Weiming, who are recognized by the Western scholarly world to be distinguished philosophers, often resort to Chinese matters only for examples.

NEW CONFUCIANS AND WESTERN IDEALS

Every generation has its own version of the China-West problem. Those, who are considered to be founders of New Confucianism managed to preserve an outsiders position towards everything which came from the West, including the ideas, interpreting them to a great degree as a tool (*yong*) aiming to strengthen the Chinese world order. The second wave of New Confucians had quite a different historical task: it seems to be very important for Mou Zongsan to prove that there existed parity between the so called Chinese philosophy and the so called Western philosophy. Mou Zongsan insisted that there are “two [equal] doors” which could be open by “one [common] heart”.⁴

Du Weiming, for his part, claims to show Chinese a way back to their spiritual virtues, which he announces to be a set of some moral postulates interpreted as Confucian ones by *Western* (writing in English) authors. In other words, he calls Chinese (also, Asians) to return back to their national spiritual domain from Western intellectual discourse. He states: “[...] we hope that East Asian leaders, inspired by the Confucian spirit of self-cultivation, family cohesiveness, social solidarity, benevolent governance, and universal peace, will practice an ethic of responsibility in managing their domestic affairs”.⁵

NEW CONFUCIANISM AND WESTERN IDEALS

All the concepts give a very uncertain indication of the actual primary sources (which term of classical Chinese philosophy Du Weiming translates as *social solidarity*?). Where to return to? To a land that never existed, to the artificial China drawn in the imagination of an American scholar? That is to say, these attractive features of Chinese society of which Du Weiming speaks from Western perspectives have very poor connection with the real Chinese world order.

In brief, after a radical turn in the western direction New Confucianism has two alternatives: one is a total melting of the Chinese culture in a “global village” culture, the second is a new sphere of fundamentalism. Somehow, there is also a two-way flow: from China to the West and back of ideas and assumptions which makes the contradictions between Chinese and non-Chinese less sharp, also in the field of philosophy. There are many examples when “alien” products, including intellectual goods, are coming to China packed in Chinese wrappings, as it happened with Chan-Buddhism, which returned to China (first – to Taiwan) through the assistance of books

written by Daisecu Suzuki (1870-1966) after they had been translated from English into Chinese.

Speaking about philosophy proper, three generations of New Confucians have focused on different problems. Xiong Shili with the help of concepts borrowed from the Western philosophy tried to show the perfection of Chinese philosophy. Focusing on this task he paid special attention to those properties of Chinese traditional thought which were comparable to Western concepts. In spite of the fact that he himself did not claim that some especially productive concepts of Western philosophy which propelled mankind's scientific development had been known in traditional China, it became apparent from his works. In this respect he focused on the question of the unity of Nature, and stressed the monistic approach of Chinese philosophy. This provides some reason why the monistic doctrine has been interpreted by non-Western philosophers as a key element of the European progress in the modern ages. What is actually of greatest interest is that this problem had been raised at the beginning of the nineteenth century by an Indian thinker, Rammohan Ray, who under the ban of restoring a true Indian approach, instead drew inspiration from English culture and Christianity, and introduced an Indian monotheism with a singular God - Brahma.

There were not so many Gods in China, as in India, which explains why in search of monistic ideas the Chinese appealed to philosophical texts, and first of all to the Buddhists texts. And it is then that Xiong Shili claimed that one of the most important concepts of Chinese philosophy was "that heart and thing basically are not two" (*xin wu ben bu er*), which he interpreted in terms of holiness or monism.⁶ It is richly ironical, that he himself was convinced that in this respect Chinese philosophical thought has been much more advanced than the European one. On contrast to the facts, he believed that in "Western learnings" "a heart and a thing" were totally separated, which was the ground for dualism.⁷

Mou Zongsan as a Xiong Shili's student developed further the concept of non-dualistic world, notably expanding a number of parameters valid for comparison between China and the West. He managed to replace the general principles of Western philosophy with which his teacher dealt with more detailed perception, which, he believed, gave him additional evidence of the perfectness of traditional Chinese philosophy. He argued that even the concept of "noumena" was known to Chinese philosophers much better than to Kant.⁸

ALTERNATIVE PERIODIZATION OF NEW CONFUCIANISM

However, the three periods of development of New Confucianism, as Liu Shuxian puts it, did not become generally recognized divisions into periods. There are also scholars who describe the historical evolution of New Confucianism from somewhat different perspectives. Li Yi (1963-), a teacher at Nankai University, suggests New Confucianism to be one of three main-streams of the 20th century Chinese thought which attempted to elaborate an

adequate response to the challenges posed by the strengthening contacts between China and the West. Those three mainstreams were Marxism, Westernization and Contemporary New Ru Learnings.⁹

While Chinese philosophers living outside the PRC borders treated New Confucianism as self-sufficient and almost isolated from the context of China's intellectual movement, which belongs largely to a world community as an integral part of international (that is Western) philosophical discourse, Li Yi argues that New Confucianism is an inevitable part of the Chinese intellectual process closely connected with 20th century Chinese history.

Li Yi took great blocks of the main 20th century Chinese political and to some extent cultural events, and applied them to the development of New Confucianism. As a result, he has three periods: 1919-1949, 1949-to the beginning of the 1960th, 1980-to present time.¹⁰

It might be argued that his attempt to define the historical periods of the development of New Confucianism is not reliable due to the fact that the researcher did not take into account the period of the "cultural revolution". Even more serious difficulties arise because of the inadequacy of the development of political history and thought. These charges are apparently true. This appeal to historical events might be a good reason for returning New Confucianism to its Chinese grounds. The attempt rests on the assumption that the roots of the New Confucianism are to be sought in China, and, what is even more interesting, not in ancient China, but in 20th century China. This somehow speaks against the approach of the New Confucians who claim to formulate a modern theory of Western discourse based on *classical* Chinese philosophical heritage.

NEW CONFUCIANISM AND MARXISM

One of the main problems posed by New Confucianism to a researcher is how it deals with Marxism. It makes no sense to deny that New Confucianism was shaped during intense discussions with pioneers of Chinese Communism. Liang Shouming, Zhang Junmai who carried out the polemics in the 20th and 14th demonstrated their animosity towards Marxists not only ideological, but politically by conducting the so called "third parties".¹¹

Personal protest against Marxism had been expressed also by Xiong Shili who consequently taught university students the philosophy of Confucianism and Buddhism at the time when professors of Marx-Lenin teaching were in great demand. Mou Zongsan never made a secret of his critical attitude towards Marxist philosophy, and in 1949 he escaped from the country. We can find apparent traces of conflict in the book of the above cited author Li Yi "Chinese Marxism and New Ru Learning" written in a deliberately correct and carefully formulated style but which in fact bears out his critical view towards New Confucians. Liu Shuxian being on the other side of the sea shares very similar anxieties. That is, he is sceptical about the "test of purity" of Feng Youlan in the capacity of a New Confucian, because the latter had "changed his earlier beliefs" which basically means that he turned away from

New Confucianism to its alternative, Communism. So far as the practice is concerned, Marxism for many years existed outside the framework of New Confucianism, but New Confucianism, in turn, was to a high degree a reaction against Marxism.

However, since New Confucians are dealing with the convergence of two philosophical traditions – Western and Chinese -- ignoring Marxism removes the possibility of meaningful dialogue. Further, expelling of Marxism from the common line of Western philosophy imposes upon Chinese proponents of New Confucianism problems of a practical character: one of which is how to make adequate translations of conceptual language of Western philosophy into Chinese without the Chinese Marxists.

For years the process of the creation of the Marxist philosophic terminology in Chinese involved highly qualified linguists from China and the Soviet Union, which provided the background for a massive export of Communism into China, with the help of linguistic interpretation. Contemporary Confucians, because of a long history of mutual confrontation, do not accept the elaboration of Western concepts by Chinese Communists, and have to rely solely on their personal feelings for the terms.

It is true also that for a long time inside the boundaries of the accepted interests of Chinese and Soviet Marxist scholars the works of Western post-classical philosophers were scarcely welcome. So far as a Russell or Whitehead is concerned, the only solution possible for a modern Chinese philosopher is linguistic experimentation.

Anyhow, any term needs a certain amount of convention, otherwise its applicability will remain in question. However, if one actually examines terms which are used to describe notions of Western philosophy in works of the New Confucians, it can be seen that those terms tend to be both tentative and arbitrary to a quite unacceptable degree.

As regards contemporary Western philosophers, it is reasonable to constitute new terminology to introduce notions till recently unknown to Chinese culture. But it is quite unclear just what is the reason for not taking into account the already successfully functioning terminology

Thus, for example, one finds Mou Zongsan in discussing the “wu” concept putting into this classical term of Chinese philosophy such very flexible characteristics as: “thing”, “matter”, “material”, “materialistic”. The question one may ask is: why did not Mou Zongsan choose to follow scholars from Continental China who specified these meanings with the help of Chinese vocabulary, translating “materialism” as “wei wu zhu yi”, “material” as “wei wu lun”, “matter” as “wu zhi” (although, quite unexpectedly Mou Zongsan sometimes makes a reference to “wu zhi”¹²). The problem of bemoaning incompatibility of Marxism as an European philosophic school and New Confucianism with its claims to represent Western philosophy became apparent once the books of the New Confucians were available in China.

NEW CONFUCIANISM AND THE PROBLEM OF SYSTEMS PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter, I seek to highlight what seems to be a methodologically important issue for an explanation of New Confucian phenomenon by applying system theory, acknowledging that the realization of “theoretical claims” will be carried out in an inductive mode, but without pretending to investigate system theory as a specific field of research.

Advancing the systematic view we presuppose the existence of two diverse systems with all necessary properties of its elements: one is a conventionally intergrated Western philosophy, the other is a conventionally integrated Chinese philosophy. This assumption that there exist two parallel philosophical systems, Western and Chinese, seems to be so apparent, that we can assume it to be derived from much evidence. But in view of the limited task of this report, we will focus on a text included by Mou Zongsan in his book “Fourteen Lectures on Possibility of Connecting Chinese and Western Philosophies”.

We must underline that these two systems are comparable due to the fact that they are constituted as systems. Every system has been independently maturing over a long period, and has been translated by many generations, thus, to the moment of their intercourse both systems were highly developed and deeply rooted in peoples consciousness. As the impact of both systems upon their environments is to be characterized in terms of totality, their manifestation in the human mind occurs in practically all spheres: cognitive, social, artistic, political and so on.

Each of the two systems operates with its own sets of concepts, handling different formal analytical procedures. Whitehead had good reasons for fighting against reductionism in the name of its unity of science, insisting on the mutual convergence of systems, as he put it, “the description of one set of relationships can be achieved [...] in terms of any one of the other [...] sets”, but even he agreed that the results could be “very clumsily”.¹³

The point that needs to be recognized is that the pre-modern philosophic systems of China and the West might be described in terms of complex entities which are of a very different kind. Due to the different structures and inputs what seems reasonable inside one system could be indistinctive in the other system, and vice versa. If we ask whether there were materialists and idealists in the Chinese past, there is no doubt that the answer will be positive. None the less, for traditional Chinese philosophic system this fact has *no distinctive value*. Whereas Western philosophy traditionally focused on the problem called: “spirit – body”, “matter – object”, “God – man”, “idea - thing”, “metaphysics - reality”, in contrast, the system of Chinese philosophy did not require this conceptual approach as a basis for explaining the world’ order, for the Chinese this had only marginal value.

The Chinese and the Western philosophic systems both elaborated highly sophisticated explanations of the world order, and were at most effective in providing recommendations on how to respond to its general chal-

allenges. For one maturing in definite forms of reflection it is difficult to accept the idea of the existence of some other ways of generalization and conceptualization. Are we ready to understand how limited are our possibilities in translating the concept of “li”, which has no analogues in Western philosophy, into Western philosophic discourse? Are we ready to understand how the construction of nature and human life can be explained by the “li” concept? On the contrary, looking from Chinese perspective it occurs that the concept of “mind” was alien to Chinese thinkers, and, as a result, they choose to translate it with a rather inappropriate word: “heart”. Claims on the part of Westerners to offer a word “principle” to express the “li” concept are of the same kind, this still leaves them far short of any adequate translation. Once it emerges that Chinese explain “li” as everything, including the processes of burning and rotting, then how can one join this with “universal principle”. Graham, on his part, points out that it was a common practice in Chinese philosophy to indicate numbers of “li”, and puts as an example a “hundred li”.¹⁴ This actually means that “li” remains beyond our cognitive reach. A crucial source of the difference lies in the fact that there are two divorced philosophic systems operating different concepts, with peculiar set of correlations.

Someone may say that the difficulties can be overcome by using formal methods: that is, to grasp several ideas one by one from one philosophic system in order to introduce them into another system. Unfortunately this is a misconception, for it requires a systematic approach. We say “unfortunately” because it means that a cultural diffusion of humankind should be postponed for an indefinite time.

It should be emphasized the severe limitations to which an analyses of philosophers belonging to different systems are subject, simply because of the fact that they were forced into using specific languages and concepts, as well as bringing them into such relationships which have no parallels in the opposite system. Since the foregoing is put somewhat abstractly, I may try to illustrate it with a reference to Mou Zongsan’s work, to be more precise, with the part that discusses Kant’s concept of practical reason.

[...] Kant was correct in shifting to the practical reason. In order to turn to the practical reason one should get in touch with appearing in practical reason *heart of the root - ben xin*, *kindhearted knowledge - liang zhi* (Ru school), *heart of dao - dao xin* (Dao school), *heart storing the Coming Resemblance - Rulai zang xin* and *wisdom heart of prajna* (Buddhist school). All those are *hearts*. According to Kant’s words, they all are from those which appear in practical reason: *heart of dao-de*, *heart of dao*, *heart storing the Coming Resemblance*, *wisdom heart of prajna*. Then, as to all those notified *hearts*, are they limited *hearts* or unlimited *heart*?¹⁵

In addition, I would also question whether a reader of the book would not reject a high degree of arbitrariness in translating “li xing”, which basically

means a “form of li”, as a “reason” in searching for a more adequate expression of the Kant’s concept?

This example should be generalized because it represents a common way of expressing things in works of New Confucians. In addressing this text, there are, I would suggest, two main points that need to be recognized. First, works of New Confucians bear out that in present terms of philosophic vocabularies and conceptual approaches the analytical procedures of Chinese and Western philosophies are manifestly different. Secondly, it should be understood that the contemporary Chinese and Western philosophies are influenced by theories, concepts, and names of persons who occurred earlier. This allows us to see as clearly as possible the limits of theoretical applications.

This example reflects, as well, what happens to Chinese philosophy when we seek to introduce it in the Western languages and on the grounds of Western philosophic concepts. Thus, in the case in point we see that misconceptions are inevitable.

Usually New Confucians do not take into account systematic differences between Chinese and Western philosophies. One of the exceptions was Mou Zongsan, but even he was not successful in his practical application. In the absence of systematic comparison New Confucians give humankind one more unfounded hope, at least for now.

FINAL REMARKS

My critical comments have been directed against the claims of New Confucians to announce that a West - East philosophic synthesis is a reality. One author pathetically called New Confucianism a “new hybrid”.¹⁶ This seems to be the right word.

In effect, New Confucianism is a complicated phenomenon which on some issues provides a new horizon (an idea of the non-dualistic nature of Chinese philosophy), but in some issues it deals with the repetition of what had been said before, and even brings Chinese philosophy back to the very starting point of its contacts with the West (e.g. the concept of “matter” as “wu”).

I have sought to show that New Confucians did not achieve -- at least so far -- any very secure theoretical basis for uniting the philosophies of China and the West, and that they will need to demonstrate far more cogently than hitherto the possibilities for such unification in terms of theory and concepts. I doubt that this will prove possible, since it is impossible to verbalize in English, without a threat of being misconceived, what the new Confucians are speaking about in Chinese.

I have argued that, while unification certainly can be observed between the philosophies of China and the West, to concentrate attention on this does not provide the best focus for understanding and addressing major issues that are encountered in this field. The divergency of cultures should be a key help with the problem. To say more, at present New Confucianism demonstrates an apparent conflict of cultures and philosophies, but without any

attempt to explain it. Our report pointed here to the far greater importance of a theoretical approach. A theory capable of helping to overcome the problem of cross-cultural differences, as we suggested, might be systems philosophy.

Somehow, I would doubt that a further attempt is any more likely to succeed. Whether New Confucians choose to work on the theoretical background or not, the inherent logic of the Western and Chinese philosophies remains the same.

One way in which the philosophic unity in the future might be achieved is by turning the different cultures in each other's direction, without hurry, step by step, in order that people have time to become accustomed to the diversities. In this sense, apart of its philosophic claims, New Confucianism is an important enterprise.

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NOTES

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Chapter IX

Cultural Crossings against Ethnocentric Currents: toward a Confucian Ethics of Communicative Virtues¹

Sor-Hoon Tan

THE POSSIBILITY OF CROSS-CULTURAL MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Moral philosophy has recognized for some time the fact of cultural pluralism, i.e., that there are many different cultures – each comprising social, religious, artistic, intellectual practices and traditions constituting an entire way of life. Interactions among varied cultures have increased both in incidence and intensity, but the philosophical implications of cultural pluralism and cross-cultural encounters remain very much matters of debate. How could Confucian ethics today take cultural pluralism seriously, and what might Confucian ethics contribute to a cross-cultural moral philosophy?

Some consider Confucianism a historical curiosity; others see it as a dogmatic orthodoxy that propagated some of the worst authoritarian and repressive thought and practices in East Asia. I believe that it is neither something for display in “museums without walls,” nor a pernicious instrument of oppression best left buried in the past, if not completely forgotten. There are valuable resources in the Confucian tradition for reflecting on the human condition, and for thinking about perennial and contemporary problems. This paper is an attempt to extend Confucian ethics to reflect directly on the issue of cultural pluralism. It is a first step towards constructing a Confucian ethics of communicative virtues that will improve cross-cultural interaction. In suggesting a new way of construing some traditional Confucian ethical concepts and re-examining some aspects of the historical legacy of Confucianism, I hope to find more connections between Confucianism and Western ethics which will create the opportunity for cooperative cross-cultural moral philosophy.

Some might wonder about the viability of such a project. Alasdair MacIntyre points out that “every major theory of the virtues has internal to it, to some significant degree, its own philosophical psychology and its own philosophical politics and sociology.” Confucianism and Aristotelianism are incommensurable since they “present crucially different and incompatible accounts of the best way for human beings to live,” so much so that the conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about virtues seems to lead from “mutual incomprehension to inevitable rejection.”² However, MacIntyre does leave open the possibility that “two different and rival conceptual schemes may be incommensurable at one stage of their development and yet become commensurable at another.”³

Encounters between societies influenced by Confucianism and Western societies over the last century have paved the way for productive

engagements. Instead of adopting a passive stance and waiting for changes internal to each conceptual scheme to make engagement possible, one of the purposes of cross-cultural comparative philosophy is to bring about such changes. Such transformation of course could not be conducted totally in the abstract; it must be rooted in actual experience. The reality of living in a globalizing world compels us to take cultural pluralism seriously and to reflect on the ethics of cross-cultural communication.

I use 'virtue' to mean a disposition toward the good, in this case the good of cross-cultural communication; communicative virtue is a power that manifests itself as virtuosity in cross-cultural ethical communication. This concept could be employed fruitfully to discuss Confucian ethics in a cross-cultural context. Those who see virtues as inevitably culture-bound tend to emphasize a culture's coherence at the expense of its openness and capacity for change. If we cling to an essentialist definition of culture, wherein survival of its identity as a culture requires maintaining some kind of unchanging essence, then peaceful cross-cultural interaction becomes impossible when cultures meet in a common living space. But culture is "not a passive inheritance but an active process of creating meaning, not given but constantly redefined and reconstituted."⁴ Cross-cultural communication is not only possible and necessary; it could contribute to the self-renewal process of participating cultures.

CONFUCIAN ETHICS AND COMMUNICATIVE VIRTUES

The Confucian *dao* signifies both a course and a discourse; the Confucian way involves both action and communication. Understood as a philosophy synthesizing self-cultivation and community creation as a holistic way of life, Confucianism could be said to give primacy to what Jürgen Habermas calls communicative action oriented toward reaching understanding over strategic action oriented toward success. Discourse ethics lays out the conditions of ideal communication in justifying morality, but "discourse cannot by itself insure ... the conditions necessary for the actual participation of all concerned ... Often lacking are crucial socialization processes, so that the dispositions and abilities necessary for taking part in moral argumentation cannot be learned."⁵ Leaving aside the problem of whether Habermas's universalism can be sustained in Confucianism, I wish to focus on the dispositions and abilities necessary for improving cross-cultural communication, what I call communicative virtues.⁶

Even as it presupposes the possibility of mutual understanding, cross-cultural communication requires a "hermeneutic starting point" if such communication is to be more than attempts at coercion and domination. It may be that "the structures of action oriented toward reaching understanding always already presuppose those very relationships of reciprocity and mutual recognition around which *all* moral ideas revolve in everyday life no less than in philosophical ethics"; but any reciprocity or mutual recognition actually achieved can only be tentative. They do not manifest some presupposed uni-

versality; at most they are hypothesis oriented towards a regulative ideal of universalizability, and are to be tested anew in every new interaction.⁷

Any move toward mutual understanding and coordination of plans so that each participant is in a position to link one's actions to another's without a conflict arising, or at least without the risk that the interaction will be broken off, must begin for each party from a hermeneutic starting point defined mostly by one's home culture. In achieving mutual understanding, there is a "fusion of horizons."⁸ This cannot happen without re-examining and re-interpreting the home culture, even changing certain ways of thinking and feeling, so that "we learn to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different background of the formerly unfamiliar culture" – this requires us to surrender our "preconception of completeness and perfectness."⁹

A hermeneutical extension of Confucian ethics for cross-cultural communication would in turn expand our understanding of it. My interpretation of Confucianism, which does not pretend to be comprehensive in scope, is by no means unique. My purpose in this article does not require that my interpretation is the only correct interpretation. However, there are some interpretations of Confucianism as authoritarian state orthodoxy or stultifying traditionalism that are incompatible with what this article is proposing. Such interpretations tend to present Confucianism as an obsolete cultural curiosity or pernicious pre-modern hangover. While acknowledging that there has been much that is reprehensible in the practices associated with Confucianism's influence on East Asian societies, I believe that authoritarian and traditionalist interpretations tend to throw the baby out with the bath water. In reflecting upon cultural pluralism, we could develop new ways of thinking about cross-cultural moral problems with the aid of resources in Confucian ethics without pretending that Confucius or any other Confucians of the past are as sensitive to cultural diversity or as open to self-transformation to accommodate diversity as we would like.

ETHNOCENTRISM AND CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN THE CONFUCIAN TRADITION

Those looking for it will find evidence of ethnocentrism in Confucian works. For Confucius, "The Yi and Di barbarian tribes with rulers are not as viable as the various Chinese States without them."¹⁰ Mencius had "heard of the Chinese converting barbarians to their ways, but not of their being converted to barbarian ways." He described Xu Xing, a man from Chu, an area in the South, whose teaching contradicts that of Confucians, as "the Southern barbarian with the twittering tongue."¹¹ Mencius' comparison of Xu's teaching to the chattering of a bird is preceded by the outright denial of the humanity of barbarians in the *Zuo zhuan*: "Western barbarians are beasts."¹²

Later, Tang dynasty Confucian Han Yu (786-824) concluded his treatise on "The Source of the Way (*Yuan dao* 原道)" thus: "Make *humans*

of them [the barbarians], burn their books, make homes of their dwellings, make clear the way of the former kings to guide them ...”¹³ Straying from the Confucian way not only abandons Chinese culture, it constitutes a failure to be human. Han Yu often spoke of cultural others in the same breath as beasts. To him, “humans are the masters of barbarians and beasts,” though he went on to stress that masters should not abuse those under their charge, and the sages treat all (including barbarians and beasts) alike in benevolence (*yi shi tong ren* 一视同仁).¹⁴ Defending Confucian orthodoxy, Han Yu condemned Buddhism for being “a cult of the barbarian people.” That the Buddha “did not speak the language of China and wore clothes of a different fashion” bothered Han Yu as much as the fact that Buddhist teachings “did not concern the ways of [Chinese] ancient kings.”¹⁵ Han Yu was not the first to attack Buddhism in this manner. As soon as the foreign thought gained enough of a foothold in China to become a rival in the ideological struggle and the competition for power and material gains in Chinese official life, Buddhism came in for strong criticism from the Confucians.¹⁶

We find among Confucians of later dynasties similar wariness and defensiveness, if not the same venom, toward “barbarians.” Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692) claimed that “it would not be dishonest to deceive them, nor inhumane to kill them, nor ethically wrong to rob them,” even though this would depart from Confucius’ teachings, that one must adhere to one’s standards as an exemplary person when one is among “barbarians.”¹⁷ Even after the Manchus had ruled China for more than two centuries, we find Han Chinese, among them Tan Sitong (1865-1898) and Sun Yatsen (1866-1925), opposing the Qing government on the ground that, *inter alia*, they were “barbarians.”¹⁸

However, what is identified as “Chinese culture” which the Confucians defended so ardently had never been monolithic. The cultural core of *hua xia* 华夏 was not the expansion of a single center, but emerged from a confederation of several developed cultural areas; nor was there any ethnic or racial homogeneity from the very beginning.¹⁹ Not only are the boundaries unclear and unstable, the relationship between cultural center and periphery was never one of simple domination and submission; there is continuous tension and contest first within China itself and later, when emigration created a Chinese Diaspora, within the larger “cultural China.”²⁰ With an increasing number of ethnic Chinese (loosely defined) born outside China, the question for more and more Chinese is not how to treat the strangers at the gates or in their midst, but how to live as strangers in strange lands. The concept of cultural hybridity is becoming increasingly relevant to the expanding and ever-changing Chinese Diaspora. Cultural hybridity goes with “impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the pure.”²¹

Confucian ethnocentrism was often at its most offensive during the weakest moments of the Chinese empire, when the Chinese people felt their civilization, their very cultural identity, threatened. From a Confucian perspective, the ethical requirements of overcoming resistance through virtu-

ous example rather than violence, of transforming transgressors with ritual propriety rather than coercion, means that Confucian ethnocentrism should take the form of persuasion, of making the other so at home in a Confucian environment, or demonstrating its ‘superiority’ so clearly, that they adopt its ways (*Analects* 9.14). Even Han Yu, perhaps the most famous, or notorious, of ethnocentric Confucians, modified his attitude toward foreign cultures from a defensive-aggressive urge to reject and subjugate to advocate pacification and winning them over with kindness.²² This strategy of transforming the other through peaceful interaction proved surprisingly successful during various periods of Chinese history. Tribes from outside the central plains, who successfully conquered all or part of China militarily, were in turn converted culturally. Some of their elites became prominent Confucians who rival the Chinese scholars. The *Four Books* compiled by Zhu Xi (1130-1200) was established as the syllabus for the imperial civil service examinations during the Yuan dynasty, under Mongol rule. Though condemned by some Confucians as collaborationists, Yuan Confucians like Hao Jing (1223-1275) and Xu Heng (1209-1281) did their best to convert the foreign invaders into Confucian rulers, with some success.²³ Buddhism, which attracted so much Confucian opposition, did not remain “foreign” – for example, Chinese Buddhism accommodated the Confucian concern with filial piety; and the schools of *Tian tai*, *Hua yan*, and *Chan* Buddhism are distinctly Chinese.²⁴

Much as Confucians would like to think that the cultural conversion is one-way, Confucianism would not have spread so far and wide, nor would its influence have lasted for so long, if it had been totally closed to reciprocal influence by other cultures. If the Chinese transformed Buddhism, Buddhism also transformed Chinese thought and cultural life. Some of the most important Confucians during Song and Ming dynasties went through a period of intense interest in Buddhism. Though they eventually rejected Buddhism in favor of Confucianism, they learned much from it, which is evident in their works.²⁵ Its adoption by East Asian societies of Korea, Japan, and Vietnam has resulted in different versions of Confucianism that differ from that found in Chinese society, especially at the level of daily practice. A large part of present efforts to reconstruct Confucianism in the “third epoch of Confucian humanism” involves learning from other cultures, notably those of the democratic West, but at the same time contributing something to the inquiries that cut across cultural boundaries.²⁶ Without cross-cultural learning, Confucianism would not have developed as much as it has. Confucians have been able to transform Confucianism by learning from other cultures at least partly because of the potential of Confucian ethics in facilitating cross-cultural communication.

TOWARDS A CONFUCIAN ETHICS OF COMMUNICATIVE VIRTUES

Even when Confucians were ethnocentric, the virtue of co-humanity (*ren* 仁, more often translated as benevolence), a disposition to relate well

with others, tempered its hostility to other cultures.²⁷ One with such disposition prefers peaceful coexistence with other cultures, even doing his best to win them over with kindness. This virtue realizes the exemplary person (*junzi* 君子) as a relational self; in its exercise, self-cultivation and contribution to the growth of the network of human relations, in which one is embedded, are mutually constituting.²⁸ While recognizing a gradation in love toward different ‘others,’ humanistic Confucianism encourages a widening of the circle and an ever-increasing inclusiveness of the others whom the virtue could reach. This virtue of co-humanity, which Confucius explained to his student Fan Chi as “Love others” (*Analects* 12.22), should underlie all cross-cultural communication, for it ensures an ethical orientation toward the good of all involved.

One could see the communicative potential of the virtue of *ren* in the works of contemporary scholars. Among the core values that Tu Weiming suggests will make possible a fiduciary global community is the dictum, “Wishing to establish oneself, one establishes others; wishing to enlarge oneself, one enlarges others” (Tu’s translation of *Analects* 6.30) – this is Confucius’ explication of *ren* to Zi Gong. Confucius described “the method of *ren*” as “the ability to take as analogy what is near at hand” (Lau’s translation) which to D.C. Lau is *shu* 恕, the “principle of reciprocity” – another of Tu’s core values for a fiduciary global community.²⁹ Humanistic Confucianism requires us to extend the ‘analogy’ beyond ‘our kind’ defined culturally to embrace the entire human species, even the entire cosmos.

Whether rendered as ‘reciprocity’ or ‘deference,’ *shu* – “Do not impose upon others what you yourself do not want” (*Analects* 12.2, 15.24) – or rather the disposition to act thus, is another important communicative virtue. Deference ensures respect and consideration for the other, giving her as much or more freedom as a joint participant in a communicative act. It fosters a sympathetic attentiveness, listening not only to the words, but with our whole being committed to mutual understanding. There should be no pretense at understanding a situation exactly as another understands it. This is not only impossible, but any presumption that there could be identity between oneself and the other is likely to reduce the other to an echo of oneself.

This disposition to put oneself in the other’s place serves rather to activate one’s moral imagination and stretches the parochial boundaries of one’s immediate experience. It signifies a willingness to question one’s own horizon, to put at risk what has hitherto been taken for granted. One’s understanding of the other, and any shared understanding of the situation cannot completely eliminate distance between self and other, it transforms distance so as not to obstruct the coordination of plans, generate conflicts, or break off the interaction. Without this virtue, the good of cross-cultural understanding would be unattainable.

To his favorite student Yan Hui, Confucius said, “Through self-discipline and observing ritual propriety (*li* 禮) one becomes authoritative in one’s conduct (*ren*)” (*Analects* 12.1). A.S. Cua remarked, “For more than two millennia, traditional Chinese moral life and thought have been much preoccupied with *li* as a means for the realization of the Confucian ideal of human-

ity (*ren*),” while Tu Wei-ming finds a “creative tension between *ren* and *li*,” wherein *li* is the external realization of *ren* in self-cultivation.³⁰ The regulatory function of *li* in maintaining hierarchical relationship has been emphasized in traditional understanding of the statement in the *Book of Rites*, that “*Li* works from the outside (*li zi wai zuo* 礼自外作).”³¹ Confucian *li* has often been equated with traditional and conventional “rules of conduct,” which historically were sometimes so destructive of individuals that they were condemned for “cannibalism.”³²

In contrast, *li* could also be understood in a way that emphasizes its communicative role. Drawing on John Dewey’s insights, David Hall and Roger Ames give ritual propriety a central role in the creation of a ‘communicating community.’³³ Also taking a pragmatist perspective, but inspired by C.S. Peirce rather than Dewey, Robert Neville elucidates the semiotic character of ritual and its normative significance. Neville argues for the potential of Confucianism as a world philosophy; realizing that potential would significantly transform Confucianism. He argues that Boston could benefit from ‘a Confucian approach to civility’ and shows how “Boston Confucians need to invent rituals for everyday life and government that foster inclusive cultural diversity.”³⁴

Included in the complex concept of *li* in Confucianism is what we might call a virtue of civility. Henry Rosemont argues that Confucian civility does not pertain to civil society, as understood in Western discourse; instead it is an imperative to “be respectful of the other’s humanity.”³⁵ In cross-cultural communication, civility is a virtue recognizing the value of creating or sustaining non-coercive, even enriching, relations with others with different ways of life, who might even be in fundamental moral conflict with us. This virtue is the disposition to act on what David Wong calls ‘accommodation as a moral value’ – the virtue “to realize the relative validity of one’s convictions, to be open to influence by, and compromise with, others, and to be able to stand unflinchingly for those convictions when it is what one must do.”³⁶

The communicative virtue of civility is a disposition toward harmony, which the *Analects* tells us is the highest value in ritual (1.12). In communication, harmony optimizes mutual understanding wherein coordination of plans is at its best, where diversity yields richness rather than generates destructive conflict. Harmony values differences rather than sameness; as Confucius remarked, “Exemplary persons seek harmony not sameness” (*Analects* 13.23). But harmonious coordination is usually possible because culture provides a rich depository of shared meanings – this cultural limitation of civility is not peculiar to Confucianism. As Leroy Rouner points out, “Civility – always closely linked to *political community* – is almost identified with *culture*.”³⁷ Culturally shared meanings are not *prima facie* available in cross-cultural communications. Indeed, over-attachment to one’s cultural semiotics could get in the way and cause misunderstandings.

The virtue of *li*, ritually “respectful” or civil attitudes, alone will not be able to resolve cultural conflicts wherein one party finds unacceptable practices which another claims to be part of their culture, for example female cir-

cumcision, eating of dog meat or endangered species.³⁸ However, cultures do not depend on any single practice to survive, and what is important in cultural practices could often be instantiated in different tangible forms. Adaptation, like innovation, is necessary to continued survival and flourishing of cultures. Confucius was prepared to use a silk cap for the sake of frugality even though traditionally, “a hemp cap is prescribed in the observance of *li*” (*Analects* 9.3). A cross-cultural dialogue cannot even begin unless the party defending “cultural practices” is willing to accept the changeability of cultures.

On the other hand, the objecting party should examine their objections to see if these were simply expressing cultural prejudices. Prejudices are not necessarily unjustifiable, but an ethnocentric approach that denies their prevalence is also unhelpful in cross-cultural dialogue. To persuade the other, the objecting party should try their best to find justifications for their objections from within the other culture if possible since most cultures are rich enough to contain the potential for self-critique. If that is not possible or fails, another alternative is to attempt to construct some cross-cultural grounds for resolving the conflict by extending the area of consideration, for example by citing environmental consequences that would affect everybody in the case of the eating of animals threatened with extinction – the aim here is to question and hopefully extend the horizons of disagreeing parties to bring about a fusion. Whichever approach one adopts, the virtue of *li* or civility, will facilitate the process of dialogue.

Opposing those who see rituals as culturally conservative, Hall and Ames described rituals as “an inherited tradition of formalized human actions that evidence both a cumulative investment of meaning by one’s precursors in a cultural tradition, and openness to reformulation and innovation in response to the processive nature of the tradition.”³⁹ In cross-cultural contexts, the virtue of civility involves ‘inventing’ new rituals more often than mere compliance with an existing normative order. Though her conception of civility pertains to the tradition of Western civil society rather than the Confucian tradition, Virginia Straus emphasizes the importance of deliberate cultural change in promoting international civility.⁴⁰ The growth of appropriate rituals of cross-cultural communications would be an important part of such cultural change. Invention of such cross-cultural rituals cannot be done arbitrarily. The starting point is understanding and accommodating the rituals of other cultures. This must be done with respect, which is central to ritual propriety.

A respectful interest is an attitude that is encouraged even in monocultural ritual situation. Confucius, on entering the Grand Ancestral Hall, asked questions about everything. When criticized, he responded that asking questions “is itself observing ritual propriety” (*Analects* 3.15, 10.21). One should not of course apply this rigidly; explicit questions may be inappropriate in certain cross-cultural communication, and are certainly not the only way to express respectful interest. Asked whether Confucius sought the information on government he needed upon arriving in a particular state or was it offered to him, Zi Gong replied that the Master obtained all the information he needed “by being cordial, proper, deferential, frugal and unassuming”

(*Analects* 1.10). We should not set any pre-conceived limit to how creative one could be in expressing respectful interest and achieving understanding and insight into other cultures.

The need to judge what is appropriate in cross-cultural contexts, and to invent new rituals of cross-cultural communications, leads us to another important concept in Confucian ethics: *yi* 义, variously translated as justice, righteousness, rightness, appropriateness, and signification. Hall and Ames argue that “the primary meaning of *yi* lies in their function of establishing ritual actions,” though the capacity for “novelty can only be appreciated against the continuity which long established ritual conduct provides the tradition.” They see acts of *yi* as “the deriving or bestowing of meaning in such a way as to realize novel patterns uniquely suited to each concrete circumstance,” and “ritual actions as depository of the *yi* that past generations have invested in the world.”⁴¹ *Yi* is “meaning,” both sense and significance; for the Confucians this refers primarily but is not limited to ethical meaning. Rituals will be nothing more than empty forms without the personal investment of meaning in each performance. According to the *Book of Rites*, “Rituals (*li*) are the embodiments of meaning (*yi*). If an observance stands the test of its meaning, although it may not have been practiced by the ancient kings, it may be adopted based on the meaning.”⁴² Ritual meanings could be retained despite a change of forms, while at other times, a persisting form of ritual might see a change in its meaning if it is to continue as a practice in different times. When a normative order of rituals becomes unstable or impractical, creation of meaning becomes much more important in realizing the virtue of co-humanity.⁴³

The communicative virtue of meaning-making pertains also to the use of language. The *Analects* stresses the importance of learning the Odes to improve the imagination and to speak well, especially “when sent to foreign states.”⁴⁴ Like cross-cultural rituals, a mutually comprehensible vocabulary promoting ethical communication across cultures is not something we already possess, but something we look forward to. It will not take shape unless we find and create the appropriate meanings in cross-cultural encounters. A disposition to find/create meanings that promote mutual understanding and accommodation in communication must be cultivated in actual cross-cultural encounters. While those in such encounters cannot avoid interpreting the situation, the meanings found or created do not always promote peaceful and mutually beneficial interactions. **We have glaring examples of polarizing discourses, of cross-cultural interactions filled with violence, aimed at mutual emasculation.** A call to communicative virtues alone is not going to solve the problem in those extreme circumstances, but greater efforts in cultivating communicative virtues could prevent more situations from descending to those depths.

The success of meaning-making involves other Confucian virtues like trustworthiness (*xin* 信) and sincerity (*cheng* 诚). This paper cannot give a full account of all the Confucian communicative virtues. I wish to conclude with some remarks about a communicative virtue that has not hitherto been explicitly recognized as a Confucian virtue, but nevertheless should have an

important place in a Confucian communicative ethics. This is the virtue of flexibility (*bugu* 不固), which has also been associated with *yi*.⁴⁵ Confucius hated inflexibility, for “exemplary persons in making their way in the world are neither bent on, nor against, anything; rather, they go with what is appropriate (*yi*)” (*Analects* 4.10, 14.32). Exemplary persons are flexible in their learning and Confucius himself was not inflexible, being without “presuppositions of what may or may not be done” (*Analects* 1.8, 9.4, 18.8).

Cross-cultural communication requires flexibility in how participants make sense of the situation and bestow ethical significance so that cross-cultural learning and therefore cultural self-transformation could occur. The virtue of flexibility is inseparable from learning. We find in it a creative tension between tradition and novelty. One must apply Confucius’ insight about learning – revitalizing the past to realize the future – to cross-cultural encounters of the past to communicate better in the future. The richer one’s reflective experience of tradition, the more likely one would be able to interpret a given situation felicitously and respond creatively. Any understanding achieved with the virtue of flexibility remains open to revision, and therefore to improvement.

We must be aware of the limits of our learning. Confucius advised that, when we “come up empty,” we should “attack the question from both ends until we get to the bottom of it” (*Analects* 9.8). Flexibility means that in any given cross-cultural situation, we should be attuned to what is actually going on, be open to the possibility that our past experience and what we already know may not provide adequate guidance as to what to do. It is a disposition to consider issues from different angles, listen to others’ views, imaginatively incorporate as much as possible, and come up with new revisable meanings that improve the chances of reaching understanding.

As a philosophy concerned with a holistic human ideal, Confucianism needs to respond to the inevitable cultural pluralism of today’s world. I believe it is able to meet that challenge. A Confucian *junzi* of the twenty-first century will be, among other things, a virtuoso of cross-cultural communication.

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NOTES

1. This article has been published in *The International Philosophical Quarterly* (Dec 2005). We thank the Philosophy Documentation Center for permission to reprint it. It is a significantly revised version of a paper presented at the international conference on “Moral Philosophy in a Pluralistic Cross-Cultural Context,” organized by The Center for Oriental Philosophies’ Studies at the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences in June 2002. I am grateful for the comments of the participants, especially Fred Dallmayr and Hans-Georg Moeller.

2. **Alasdair** MacIntyre, “Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation Between Confucians and Aristotelians About Virtues,” in Eliot Deutsch, ed., *Culture and Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), pp. 105, 106, 112. For an argument against MacIntyre, see David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking from the Han* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. xii-xv.

3. MacIntyre, p. 109.

4. **Bhikhu** Parekh, *Rethinking Culturalism* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 153.

5. **Jürgen** Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), p. 209.

6. I read Habermas’s claim to universality as hypothetical and subject to falsification in new cultural contexts. It is not the objective of this paper to test that hypothesis. Despite his explicit concern to avoid the “ethnocentric fallacy,” Habermas underestimates the complex relationship between culture and the moral point of view. For more on this, see Georgia Warnke, “Communicative Rationality and Cultural Values,” in Stephen K. White, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 120-42.

7. Habermas, p. 130. I actually think this position is compatible with Habermas’s discourse ethics, though others see his position as assuming a stronger *a priori* universality.

8. **Hans-Georg** Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 337-41. Though *Truth and Method* is primarily concerned with understanding in general rather than cross-cultural understanding specifically, the hermeneutical approach has inspired many cross cultural dialogues, e.g. Fred Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-cultural Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Karl-Heinz Pohl, ed., *Chinese Thought in a Global Context* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). An ethics of communicative virtue that borrows its methods would supplement its insights on the act of understanding with an account of what would be required ethically of cross-cultural communicators in terms of virtues.

9. **Charles** Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 67.

10. *Analects* 3.5. Unless otherwise stated, translations of the *Analects* are from Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 1998).

11. *Mencius* 3A4. D.C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1984), pp. 107, 109.

12. Yang Bojun 杨伯俊, *Zuo’s Commentaries on the Spring and Autumn Annals with Annotations (Chun qiu zuo zhuan zhu 春秋左传注)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 936.

13. **Italics added.** Han Yu, *Complete Works (Han Changli quan ji 韩昌黎全集)* (Shanghai: Zhonghua Press, 1935) p. 131. Translated in William Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, second

edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), vol. 1, p. 573. The title *Yuan dao* is translated as *Essentials of the Moral Way* in this collection.

14. “**The Source of Humanity** (*Yuan ren* 原人),” in Han Yu, p. 133.

15. “**Memorial on the Bone of Buddha** (*Lun fogu biao* 论佛骨表),” *ibid.*, p. 333. Translated in de Bary and Bloom, pp. 583-4.

16. For an early example of the debate between Buddhism and Confucianism along these lines, see “Disposing of Error (*Mou zi li huo lun* 牟子理惑论),” in de Bary and Bloom, p. 425. This is often cited to show the development of Buddhism in China at the end of the Han dynasty. On the ideological battle between Confucianism and Buddhism, see Ku Cheng-mei Kathy, “Northern Liang Buddhism and the Development of Buddhist Ideology by Taiwu Emperor of the Northern Wei,” *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* 13 (2000) 227-66.

17. Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *On Reading Sima Guang's Comprehensive History of China* (*Du tong jian lun* 读通鉴论) (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1936), p. 607. Cf. *Analects* 9.14; see also John Knoblock, trans., *Xunzi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), vol. 1, p. 154.

18. Tan Sitong, *An Exposition on Benevolence* (*Ren xue* 仁学), Sin-wai Chan, trans. (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1984), pp. 150, 271. Sun Yat-sen, *Complete Works* (*Zong li quan shu* 总理全书) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981), vol. 1, p. 20. This is not to deny that these thinkers have good reasons for opposing the Qing government; it is just significant in the present context that their non-Chinese origins should count against the Qing rulers.

19. Chang Kwang-chih, *The Archeology of Ancient China*, 4th revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Fei Xiaotong *et al.*, *Unity in Diversity Situation of the Chinese People* (*Zhong hua min zu duo yuan yi ti ge ju* 中华民族多元一体格局) (Beijing: Zhongyang minzu xueyuan, 1989).

20. **For more on the complexity of this cultural contest in the contemporary world**, see Tu Wei-ming, “Cultural China: The Periphery as Center,” *Daedalus* 120.2 (1991) 1-32.

21. **Salman Rushdie**, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays in Criticism, 1981-1991* (New York: Penguin, 1992), p. 394.

22. Han Tingyi 韩廷一, *Studies of Han Yu's Thought* (*Han changli si xiang yan jiu* 韩昌黎思想研究), revised edition (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1991) pp. 55-88.

23. See Liu Zehua 刘泽华, ed., *History of Chinese Political Thought – Sui to Qing Dynasty* (*Zhong guo zheng zhi si xiang shi* 中国政治思想史) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 457-62; “Xu Heng and Kubilai Khan” in de Bary and Bloom, pp. 764-79.

24. **Arthur Wright**, *Buddhism in Chinese History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953); Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, revised second edition (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Kenneth Chen, *Buddhism in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

25. Zhu Ruikai 祝瑞开, ed., *Song-Ming Thought and Chinese Civilization* (*Song ming si xiang he zhong hua wen ming* 宋明思想和中华文

明) (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1995). For cross-cultural learning in the Tang dynasty, see Zhang Yue 张跃, *New Directions in Later Tang Confucianism (Tang dai hou qi ru xue de xin qu xiang 唐代后期儒学的新趋向)* (Taipei: Wenjing chubanshe, 1993).

26. Tu Wei-ming, "Toward a Third Epoch of Confucian Humanism: A Background Understanding," in Irene Eber, ed., *Confucianism – The Dynamics of Tradition* (New York: Macmillan, 1986). For a general discussion of cross-cultural learning in the Chinese tradition, see also Tang Yijie 汤一介, *Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in Traditional Chinese Culture (Zhong guo chuan tong wen hua zhong de ru dao shi 中国传统文化中的儒道释)* (Beijing: Zhongguo heping chubanshe, 1988).

27. See Peter Boodberg's derivation of the meaning of 'co-humanity' from the character composition of *ren*, "The Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts," *Philosophy East and West* 2.4 (1953) 317-32.

28. For a more extensive discussion of *ren* as 'person-making' involving 'mutual incorporation between the self and the other,' see David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 114-25.

29. Tu Wei-ming, "Core Values and the Possibility of a Fiduciary Global Community," in Katharine and Majid Tehranian, eds., *Restructuring for world peace: on the threshold of the twenty-first century* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 1992), pp. 333-45; D.C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: the Analects* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 15.

30. A.S. Cua, "Li and moral justification: A study in the *Li Chi*," *Philosophy East and West* 33.1 (1983): 1-16, p. 1. Tu Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation*, (Boston: Cheng & Tsui Co., 1998 [1978]), chapters 1 and 2.

31. Sun Xidan 孙希旦, ed., *Book of Rites with Collected Annotations (Li ji ji jie 礼记集解)* (Beijing: Zhong Hua, 1998), p. 987.

32. Lu Xun, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, William A. Lyell, trans. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990) p. 32. On the other hand, de Bary considers Confucian rites problematic not because of their oppressive nature, but because without communitarian institutional structures, "consensual rituals fell victim to the superior power of the state." William Theodore de Bary, *Asian Values and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 91.

33. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius and the Hope for Democracy in China* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), chapter 10. See also Sor-hoon Tan, "From Cannibalism to Empowerment: an Analects-Inspired Attempt to Balance Community and Liberty," *Philosophy East and West* 54.1 (2004) 52-70.

34. Robert Cummings Neville, *Normative Cultures*, in *Axiology of Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), vol. 3, chapter 7; "Confucianism as a World Philosophy," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 21 (1994) 5-25; and *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late Modern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 16.

35. Henry Rosemont, "On Confucian Civility," in Leroy Rouner, ed., *Civility* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2000), p. 188. Cf. Edward Shils, "The Virtue of Civil Society," *Government and Opposition*, 26.1 (1991) 3-20; James Schmidt, "Is Civility a Virtue?" in Rouner, pp. 17-39.

36. David Wong, "Coping with Moral Conflict and Ambiguity," in Lawrence Foster and Patricia Herzog, eds., *Defending Diversity: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives on Pluralism and Multiculturalism* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), p. 32.

37. Rouner, p. 2.

38. I am indebted to A.T. Nuyen for raising this question.

39. Hall and Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, p. 88.

40. Virginia Straus, "Making Peace: International Civility and the Question of Culture," in Rouner, pp. 229-246.

41. Hall and Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, pp. 83-110.

42. Sun Xidan, p. 618, author's translation. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between *li* and *yi*, see Sor-hoon Tan, *Confucian Democracy: a Deweyan Reconstruction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 82-7.

43. We see this in Mencius's emphasis on *yi* rather than *li*, and Confucius' praise of Guan Zhong despite the latter's ritual transgression (*Analects* 3.22, 14.9, 14.16, 14.17).

44. *Analects* 13.5, 17.9, 16.13. See also D.C. Lau's discussion of the role of the *Odes* in various forms of communication. Lau, pp. 41-2.

45. Chen Daqi 陈大齐, *Essays on Confucianism (Kong zi xue shuo 孔子学说)* (Taipei, Zhengzhong, 1964), pp. 137-9.

Chapter X

The Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an “Infantile” Teaching on Destroying Death by Life

Artem I. Kobzev

As known, there is no adequate term in traditional Chinese philosophy to denote the Western concept of “philosophy”. As a common analogy to this term, in a certain, albeit much broader sense, use is made there of the category *zi*, embracing the works of philosophers, scientists, wise men, and counsellors. In a wide and diverse semantic field of this hieroglyph, what stands out is an antithesis formed of combining the above meaning with the denotation of “fetus”, “baby”, “child”, and “son”.

Awareness of this antithesis in Chinese culture is most evidenced by the image of Lao-zi, a highly original Chinese philosopher, personified primarily in the oxymoron that is his name, meaning literally the Old Child, and a legend about his birth when he was a grey-haired 81-year-old man.

The principal work reflecting the ideas of this philosopher, entitled accordingly as *Lao-zi*, but known also as *Dao de jing*, represents both the general apologia of infantility (§ 10, 28, 49, 55, 76) and the author’s self-identification with the state of a newborn infant (§ 20).

The definition of consciousness (“heart” -- *xin*) of this philosopher child conjoins two pairs of antinomies: wisdom and silliness, elitist and folk character. The people’s heart appears to encompass both the heart of the perfect sage and that of a child (§ 49). As a matter of fact, in this cultural context, the concepts of “child” and “folk” are brought so closely together that they come to denote the single word *chi-zi*, meaning literally “a red child”, i.e., a newborn infant, or a baby, see, for example, *Han shu*, ch. 89, the biography of Gong Sui.

As the one endowed with the child’s and the people’s heart, the philosopher is simultaneously perceived as the bearer of the heart of a simpleton (*Dao de jing*, § 20). The natural association of childhood with foolishness, fixed down in the notion of infantility, manifests itself in the term used to denote “the child’s heart” (*tong xin*) in *Zuo zhuan* (Xiang-gong, 31st year of his reign).

Meng-zi, a concurrent and no less fundamental Confucian treatise, contains a thesis formulated on the basis of a synonymous expression quite consonant with *Lao-zi*: “The great man is the one who never loses his child’s heart (*chi-zi zhi xin*)” (IV B, 12).

Moreover, the very name of Confucianism creator Kong-zi (Confucius), like the name of his main philosophic opponent, harbors a similar oxymoron. The archaic denotation of the hieroglyph *kong*, as recorded the canonic texts *Shu jing* and *Shi jing*, (both of paramount importance for Chinese culture in general and for Confucianism in particular), used to mean “big”, “great”,

“giant”, and “colossal”. This symbol in the same meaning was used also in *Lao-zi* (§ 21). Accordingly, the binomial *Kong-zi* may be translated literally as the Big Child, the Great Offspring, the Giant Infant, or the Colossal Baby.

In early Confucianism and, respectively, in the text *Lun yu*, the hieroglyph *zi* as it were started to acquire the meaning of “philosopher”. This terminological process ended in the 1st century in the most ancient Chinese bibliographical catalogue *Yi wen zhi* (“The Treatise on Arts and Texts” -- *Han shu*, ch. 30), where *zi* was already used to classify the category of all philosophers and their works.

Confucius’ other terminological accomplishment is the new meaning imparted to the binomial *jun-zi* (“the emperor’s offspring”, “princeling”), which became a basic category of Confucianism, defining not the ruler’s scion but a nobleman as an ideal type of personality. This semantic transformation was also built on eulogizing the infant, revealing another oxymoron: *jun-zi* denoting a child (*zi*), who is great and noble, whereas his antagonist *xiao-ren* means an adult (*ren*), who is small and worthless.

The next major terminological innovation of Confucius and his closest disciples is imparting the meaning of a Confucian to the hieroglyph *ru*. However, this word denoting not only learning but also weakness and tenderness is akin to its homonym *ru* carrying the key *zi* and the corresponding meaning “child”. An apparent echoe of this etymological connotation can be found in Confucius’ classical description of *ru* in the chapter “The Behavior of *ru*” in the canon *Li-ji* (ch. 41/38). There, in particular, the Confucian is described as “weak, helpless, as if feeble” (*zhu-zhu ruo wu-neng*). Judging by some texts, instead of the hieroglyph *zhu*, its more complex homonym *zhu*, meaning literally “young” and “immature”, could be used in the original copy of this canon. Taking this into consideration, it would be more accurate to translate the binomial *zhu-zhu* as “childlike weakness”.

Meng-zi, regarded as the second founder of Confucianism, with his quite befitting surname Meng meaning the Firstling, theoretically justified the above delineated “weakness” in his famous thesis: “The great man (*da ren*) is the one who never loses his child’s heart” (*Meng-zi*, IV B, 12). This thesis was later developed by Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529), a foremost neo-Confucianist follower of Meng-zi, into the general principle of “preserving the child’s heart” -- *cun tong (zi zhi) xin*.

Such obvious adherence of both Confucius and Liao-zi, the forefathers of Chinese philosophy, to infantility was symbolized in the traditional iconography of their legendary meeting, described for the first time in *Zhuang-zi* (chs. 14, 21) and *Shi-ji* (chs. 47, 63). As a rule, these icons depict the third participant in this meeting, a child standing in-between them and thus uniting these two personalities.

At first sight, this rapprochement of supreme wisdom and infantility reflects the universal human faith that the gospel truth comes out of the mouths of babes and sucklings and that it should be also revealed by philosophers. Or, to quote Li Zhi (1527-1602), “the supreme culture (*wen*) in China

cannot but originate in the child's heart" which is identical to "the true heart" (*zhen xin*).

Yet, under close scrutiny, the very association of infancy with the truth needs clarification. To this end, it seems appropriate to trace the etymology of the hieroglyph *zi* as a part of the term "infant" (e.g., "a red child" -- *chi-zi*).

In the ancient Chinese texts on the *Shang-Yin* oracle bones inscriptions, this term denotes the central participant in the ritual of offering to an ancestor -- a child representing the dead. Later on, in the Zhou period, this ritual character came to be defined by the term *shi*, meaning "the corpse", which initially, in the *Shang-Yin* epigraphy, used to depict a person either squatting or lying cross-legged. Most likely, the imitation of the corpse's motionless posture by this participant in a funeral ritual was the precondition for the combination of both meanings in the hieroglyph *shi*. Presumably, this posture belongs to a woman occupying the central top place on the silk funeral T-shaped banner, dating back to the 2nd century B.C., which was discovered in 1972 in the burial ground Mawangdui-1 near the town of Changsha, Hunan province.

The term *shi* in the meaning of "a child representing the dead" was most aptly translated by the German sinologists (V. v. Strauss and W. Grube) as "Totenknecht", i.e., literally "a boy dead" [cf. the less unequivocal translations: as "personator of the dead (departed)" or "representative of the spirit" by the British sinologist J. Legge, and as "the ancestors' emissary", "deputy of the dead", or "the spirits' agent" by the Russian sinologist A.A. Shtukin.

The boy dead played a major part in the ritual of offering to an ancestor; occupying a privileged position, he was the first to receive and taste the alms, and was honored by the high-ranking persons. One of the odes in *Shi jing* (III, II, 4) is dedicated to this boy, while he is one of the main characters in two more odes also describing the offering to ancestors (II, VI, 5; II, VI, 6).

It is obvious that such etymology of the term *zi* reveals the deep-rooted correlation of supreme wisdom not only with infancy but also death. In the West, this dialectic was brilliantly disclosed by Plato, who defined philosophy as a *science to die*, and which was subsequently used by the Stoics as their principal precept, and in other leading philosophical trends up to existentialism viewing life as life-to-death.

The Christian antithesis of faith as a *science to resurrect* virtually constitutes a reappraisal of the same correlation, adding only to the natural destroying life by death the supernatural destroying death by death, which is also performed by "the son" combining in himself -- akin to the boy dead -- three characters: (1) a living person as the Son of man, (2) a supernatural creature as the Son of God; and (3) the corpse of the crucified Lord. Apparently, this common character conceals the typological unity underlying the ritual of offering, which in the course of its development assumed, however, disparate forms in different cultures.

In the context of traditional Chinese culture, the question about death as the "last" in any philosophical thought becomes the "first", or "childish" because from the position of its comprehensive naturalism an unsophisticated

child and a wise old man, albeit from opposite ends, are equally close to non-existence -- one has just emerged from it whereas the other is nearing it.

Etymologically and semantically, the idea of radical substitution, or complete reversal, intrinsic to the hieroglyph *zi*, has also a more earthly social application. Both the Taoists and the Confucians believed in the possibility of the last turning into the first, even if only in the role of “uncrowned king”. The powerful statehood of the Middle Empire rested on this seemingly ephemeral basis, assuming that any “man in the street” could become the perfect Yao, Shun or Yu (*Meng-zi*, VI B, 2; *Xun-zi*, ch. 23), i.e., even a common man could turn into an emperor, which was repeatedly realized in practice.

It is the idea of infantility as the ultimate social and purely anthropological fragment that underlies the Confucian concept of a model personality, its denomination *jun-zi* combining two meanings: a “nobleman” and “the ruler’s son”. In a similar way and owing to the same hieroglyph *zi*, this idea is applied in the standard denomination of the supreme social manifestation of the human essence, that is, “the crowned king”, or emperor -- *tian-zi*, meaning literally “the son of heaven”.

Therefore, noblemen and emperors are regarded as children just like the philosophers (*zi*). If we reverse the given definition, it turns out that a nobleman is identical to a philosopher who realizes himself in control and practices self-control, while the emperor is a philosopher by virtue of divine mercy or from nature (i.e., heaven) according heaven mandat (*tian ming*).

The ideal of an “uncrowned king” (*su wang*) and “the mysterious perfect sage” (*xuan sheng*), which emerged on the opposite pole in Taoism and was oriented not toward social heights but individual depths, has eventually produced a similar procreative symbol of conceiving “the immortal fetus” (*dan tai*).

An adherent of this alchemistic-psychophysiological teaching had to perform “a sneaky trick with the spring of nature” (*dao ji*), i.e., to reverse the direction of natural progress from the cradle to the grave, literally to enter one’s second childhood, by conceiving and upbringing in oneself an infant who was destined, ten moons later, to acquire the new immortal body and “dispose of the corpse” (*shi jie*), which was quite realistically depicted in accompanying illustrations. Even though at a clearly new cultural, philosophical and even scientific level, this doctrine in fact reproduced the archaic structure of the ancient Chinese naturalistic ritual in which the defeat of death was attained by the life-giving force embodied in child-bearing. This mental paradigm in the condensed form is fixed in the semantics of the hieroglyph *sheng*, which identifies life, i.e., antideath, with procreation.

Yet, there is a fundamental difference in the development of the ritual archetype described above by the Confucians and the later Taoists. In full accordance with the archaic precept, the Confucians viewed the immersion in infantility as a life-giving generic principle. A philosopher perceived as *zi*, i.e., “child” or even “fetus” and “seed” (one more meaning of this hieroglyph), becomes a natural sampling of his own generic source -- the people, the latter for

all its infantility, being “the ears and eyes of Heaven” (*Shu jing*, ch. 4), blazes the way for a philosopher to gain an insight into supreme (divine) truths.

The Taoists during the so-called religious period in the development of their teaching and, probably under the influence of Buddhism, started to treat the same “way to Heaven” as infantile, but without associating it with the generic folk principle. For this reason the Confucians criticized the Taoists mainly for individualism and asociality.

Nonetheless, the two main directions in Chinese philosophy were brought closely together owing to another manifestation of infantility. Within the framework of traditional Chinese culture with its self-awareness based on “the written language” (*wen*), their main task was the generation of texts. The written scripts were perceived quite naturalistically, exactly like procreation, and regarded as made up of corporeal essences -- hieroglyphs (*zi*). The latter were seen as the natural product created by philosophers-*zi*, for their homonymic denomination was etymologically derived from their designation and, in their semantics, carried the idea of child-bearing, learning and upbringing. The same idea, through the common etymology, imbues the semantic field of terms defining the final product of a Chinese philosopher -- his teaching (*xue*, *jiao*).

In the most general culturological sense, such teaching both in form and content represents the naturalistic regeneration of the deceased, or the “infantile” philosophy of defying death by life.

SUMMARY

In order to comprehend the distinctness of traditional Chinese philosophy, it is of vital importance to ascertain the precise meaning (as well as the etymology) of its self-denomination. This denomination (*zi*) combines in itself the notions of a sage teacher and a simple-child. The two main directions of Chinese philosophy, Confucianism and Taoism, have theoretically adopted these meanings, albeit by placing emphasis on either the first or the second, respectively. Moreover, the physical features defined by these images have found a symbolic reflection in the mythologized descriptions of the appearance and origin of the forefathers of Confucianism and Taoism, Confucius and Lao-zi, and also in their very names. Etymologically, the term *zi* is connected with a very ancient ritual of offering to an ancestor, in which it denoted to a child to represent the dead. The philosophical tradition that had adopted such a denomination perceived itself as a naturalistic teaching on overcoming the chaos of death by the organic means of “generating life” (*sheng sheng*).

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Chapter XI

Confucianism and Deweyan Pragmatism: A Dialogue

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INTRODUCTION: COMPARATIVE STUDIES

A.N. Whitehead, an adopted and self-confessed American philosopher, said in reference to his half-brother John Dewey: “If you want to understand Confucius, read John Dewey. And if you want to understand John Dewey, read Confucius.”¹ But the same Whitehead also announced (quite shamelessly for some) that in philosophizing, it is better to be interesting than to be true. This leaves us to wonder, then, whether Whitehead really thought there was something substantial to be had from a tandem reading of Dewey and Confucius, or whether he only meant to recommend this curious exercise as a way of brightening up an otherwise dull day.

While the comparison between Dewey and Confucius, taken in Whitehead’s own historical moment, might have seemed baffling, ironically we can from our present vantage point identify a set of seemingly disparate yet interrelated historical circumstances that years hence might be weighed, measured, and with 20-20 hindsight, interpreted as having anticipated just such a dialogue. Is there in fact a sea change occurring in our present world that might bring Deweyan pragmatism and Confucian philosophy together productively? What are the conditions that might conspire to send Dewey on a second mission to China? Instead of encountering the maelstrom of May Fourth China, will Dewey on this occasion be catching the ebb tide as to Tu Wei-ming’s “third wave Confucianism” finally reaches our American shores?

At the macro international level, the US and China have arguably the most important economic and political relationship in the world today. This increasingly complex relationship, although driven by obvious mutual benefit, remains not only fragile and unstable, but also largely underdeveloped because of a profound lack of cultural understanding.

For some time now, in our seats of higher learning, Western philosophy—that is, almost exclusively European philosophy—has constituted the mainstream curriculum worldwide. This is as true in Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul, and Delhi as it is in Boston, Oxford, Frankfurt, and Paris. If indigenous Asian and American philosophies have been ignored abroad, they have also been significantly marginalized within their home cultures.² William James had it almost right when he prefaced his Gifford lectures by admitting that “it seems the natural thing for us [Americans] to listen whilst the Europeans talk,”³ except that he might have invited the Asians to the Aberdeen audience.

Beginning from the American side of the Pacific, an internal critique continues to be waged within professional Western philosophy under the

many banners of hermeneutics, post-modernism, neo-pragmatism, neo-Marxism, deconstructionism, feminist philosophy, and so on, that takes as a shared target what Robert Solomon has called “the transcendental pretense”—idealism, objectivism, the master narrative, “the myth of the given.” Of course, it was this same target in the guise of what Dewey himself was ultimately to call “*the philosophical fallacy*” that motivated his critique of both idealism and realism: the presumption that the outcome of a process is the antecedent of that process.⁴

Over the past ten or fifteen years, particularly but not exclusively within America itself, we have witnessed a resurgence of interest in classical pragmatism marked by a proliferation of sophisticated studies on the evolution of American philosophy. A major theme in the telling of this story is an attempt to articulate Dewey’s Wittgensteinian turn as a philosopher. A common feature of these many philosophical biographies seems to be an effort to clarify Dewey’s use of a familiar vocabulary deployed in radically unfamiliar ways. To the extent that these contemporary scholars are telling an importantly new story, the now common claim that Dewey’s Chinese students did not really understand him might be expanded to include his immediate American students as well.

Professional Western philosophy has until very recently been quite comfortable in ignoring Asian philosophies (not to mention African and Islamic traditions) and, remaining undistracted by anything more than a passing impression of what these traditions are about, has invoked the warrant that such schools of thought are not really “philosophy.” In so doing, the profession has inspired the term, “comparative philosophy,” a curious category that is justified geographically rather than philosophically.

But within the context of the recent “canons and multiculturalism debate” and driven by a discerned need to “internationalize” undergraduate education in America, non-Western philosophical traditions have willy-nilly made a perceptible aggression on the philosophical curriculum. The comparative philosophy movement, from the wandering World Congress to Honolulu’s comparative cabal to Boston’s Confucians, have put their shoulder to the boulder and achieved some momentum in what until recently has seemed to be a largely Sisyphean labor. Victory for the comparative philosophy movement is still a distant hope, but if and when it comes, it will be mercifully Pyrrhic: that is, to succeed in this struggle is to banish this most unnatural category, “comparative philosophy,” from the philosophical lexicon.

On the Chinese side of the pond, China today, no longer satisfied with being the Chinatown of the world, is undergoing the greatest and most thoroughgoing transformation in her long history. A “floating population” of between 100 and 200 million people—almost 20 percent of the country—have left the countryside and are residing in the urban centers looking to improve their lives in the new China. This continuing displacement of people brings with it centrifugal tensions and real potential for social disorder. Under these conditions, the prime directive of the central government has been the maintenance of social order, an axiom that often stalls if not in fact counteracts

movement toward liberal reform. Like everything in China, the magnitude of this country's structural and social problems is mammoth. Indeed, it is the scale of these stubborn problems that provides ready grist for our popular Western media that seems almost pathologically devoted to the demonizing of China and everything China does.

We need to get beyond the negative advertising about China and actually visit the homes and the workplaces, the streets and the classrooms. When we do, we find that this lumbering Chinese caterpillar is steadily spinning its cocoon, and although there is a real blindness in this sticky process of democratization, there is also much speculation among the spinners themselves as to what kind of democracy will ultimately emerge. At the very least, China is dreaming she is a butterfly.

Turning to the Chinese academy, it would be fair to say that while contemporary Western philosophy has ignored China, Chinese philosophy, true to its tradition and with some vigor since Yan Fu's appropriation of Western liberalism in the late Qing, has been porous and resolutely "comparative" in the sense of absorbing into itself whatever would offer it the best competition. That is, in the twentieth century, for several generations an increasingly sinosized variation on Marxist-Leninism smothered an inchoate Deweyan pragmatism and submerged the vestiges of Confucianism to become a new cultural orthodoxy. At the same time, many if not most of the distinguished names in the New Confucianism movement such as Xiong Shili, Tang Junyi, and Mou Zongsan looked to Europe, largely Germany, as a standard to justify Chinese second order thinking as a respectable philosophical tradition. Important for our anticipated dialogue is that in the first May Fourth encounter between Confucianism and Dewey, Confucianism was being reviled by the New Culture Movement intellectuals as plaque clotting the arteries of China, retarding the vital circulation of those new ideas necessary to enable it to emerge into the modern world. And Dewey was prescribed as the antidote.⁵

While Marxism-Maoism has largely subsided, in contemporary Chinese philosophy, there has been a marked progression from Kant and Hegel in the earlier days, to phenomenology, Wittgenstein, and in particular Heidegger today. It is germane to a possible Confucian-Deweyan dialogue that the shift in interest from Kant to Heidegger has been motivated in important degree by perceived relevance to indigenous ways of thinking. In fact, the reestablishment of Chinese sovereignty in the mid-twentieth century and, over the last ten or fifteen years, the steady emergence of China as a world power, is fueling within China a renewed yet critical awareness of its own cultural tradition as a resource for self-understanding, and as a platform for engaging the delayed but now ineluctable processes of globalization.

While European philosophy has served as a standard for philosophical rigor, Western scholarship on Chinese philosophy and culture has until fairly recently been largely ignored by Chinese scholars who felt that they had little to learn from foreign reflections on China's own tradition. Over the past ten or fifteen years, institutionalized scholars responsible for transmitting and interpreting the Chinese tradition have extended their initial attention from

what expatriate Chinese scholars have to contribute to the cultural debate, to become increasingly interested in Western interpretations of Chinese culture. There is a flourishing market in China today for translations and discussions of Western sinology.

This set of complementary and interpenetrating conditions has set the stage for a conversation between a newly revised Deweyan pragmatism and a Confucianism that is returning to prominence with a growing Chinese self-esteem and pride in its traditions.

DEWEY

What is Deweyan pragmatism? Robert Westbrook recounts how the early critics of pragmatism attacked it condescendingly as a “would-be philosophical system” with distinctively American characteristics, and how Dewey responded by readily allowing the relationship between philosophical ideas and the cultural sensibilities within which they are embedded.⁶ The American sensibility is not to be found in an assessment of notions such as “fundamental principles,” “system of values,” “ruling theories,” or “core beliefs.” The term “sensibility” is best understood dispositionally as a nuanced manner of anticipating, responding to, and shaping the world about one. Sensibilities are complexes of *habits* that both create and are created by *habitats* and that promote specific, personal manners of *in-habiting* a world. Cultural sensibilities are not easily expressed through the analysis of social, economic, or even political institutions. Such sensibilities reside in the prominent feelings, ideas, and beliefs defining the culture.⁷ Richard Rorty certainly reminds us that while our American sensibility may be characterized partly through the description and analysis of ideas, it is perhaps most readily available through the indirection and evocation associated with poetry and literature.

At a personal level, the philosopher Dewey was a lifelong advocate of “democracy,” where his understanding of democracy and his role in promoting the social intelligence that defines it was nothing more or less than the advocacy of the consummate, even spiritual way of living that he sought to embody. Democracy is the flourishing community as it emerges concretely and processively through the “equality” and “individuality” of its specific members. The proper occupation of philosophy thus understood, must “surrender all pretension to be peculiarly concerned with ultimate reality, or with reality as a complete (i.e. completed) whole: with *the* real object.”⁸ In this respect, Dewey’s long career as a social activist, taking him from the underbelly of Chicago, to a simmering revolution in China, to educational reform in Turkey, to the Trotsky trials in Mexico City, was fair demonstration of his commitment to what in fact he called “the recovery of philosophy.”

Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of **philosophers and becomes a method**, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.

And what is “Confucianism?” In the Confucian tradition too, philosophical “knowing (*zhi* 知),” far from being some privileged access to a Reality lying behind the everyday world, is an attempt to “realize” a world in the sense of mediating the existing conditions to “make a desirable world real.” Speaking in the broadest terms, Confucianism is a meliorative aestheticism concerned with appreciating the world—adding value to it—through the cultivation of a meaningful, communicating human community. And the prominence of ritual as a primary level of communication in this process suggests that the site of realizing this world is ritualized, concrete feeling. In general terms, we can observe that the self-understanding of many Chinese philosophers approximates Dewey’s vision of the philosopher as the purveyor of considered, intelligent practice to adjust situations and improve upon the human experience.

What are the specific resonances between a Deweyan pragmatism and Confucianism that might make a dialogue between them profitable? In the earlier collaborative work David Hall and I have done, and in this brief essay too, the attempt has been at best to reconnoiter and make suggestive forays into some promising terrain, rather than to try to “cover the territory.” This being said, we might begin from the relational and radically contextualized Confucian notion of person, an embeddedness that we have tried to express in the language of “focus and field.” In *The Democracy of the Dead* chapters 8-10—“Confucian Democracy: A Contradiction in Terms,” “The Chinese Individual,” and “The Role of Ritual in a Communicating Community”—we summarize what we would suggest are some of the defining sensibilities of the irreducibly social Confucian person. While good scholars certainly disagree, there is on my reading minimal dispute with respect to our understanding of notions such as “the symbiotic relationship that obtains among the radial spheres of personal, communal, political, and cosmic cultivation,” “the process of self-cultivation through ritualized living,” “the centrality of communication and the attunement of language,” “the inseparability of the cognitive and affective dimensions of experience,” “an understanding of the heart-and-mind (*xin*) (or ‘thinking and feeling’) as a disposition to act rather than a framework of ideas and beliefs,” “the construal of knowing as an epistemology of caring: trust rather than truth,” “the prevalence of correlative (rather than dualistic) thinking,” “the pursuit of self-realizing as authentication in practice,” “the familial nature of all relationships,” “the centrality of family and filial deference,” “the high value of inclusive harmony,” “the priority of ritual propriety to rule or law,” “the role of exemplary modeling,” “the didactic function of sage as virtuoso communicator,” “the expression of sagacity as focusing and enchanting the familiar affairs of the day,” “a recognition of the continuity between humanity and the numinous,” and so on.

There is much in this model of human “becoming” as a communal “doing and undergoing” that sounds like Dewey. One virtue of pursuing a comparison between Dewey and Confucianism is that until now much of the discussion of Chinese philosophy tends to take place within the framework and categories of the Western philosophical tradition. Dewey’s attempt to

reconstruct philosophy largely abandons the technical vocabulary of professional philosophy in favor of ordinary language, although at times used in rather extraordinary ways.

An example is Dewey's notion of "individuality." Individuality is not a ready-made given, but rather arises qualitatively out of ordinary human experience. And "experience" as Dewey uses this term will not resolved into familiar dualistic categories such as "subjective" and "objective." Indeed, the inseparability of subject and object is a function of what Dewey understands to be the intrinsic and constitutive nature of personal relations. Situated experience for him is prior to any abstracted notion of agency. Experience, like the terms "life" and "history" and "culture," is both the process and the product of the interaction between human organism and the social, natural, and cultural environments:

"Experience" . . . includes *what* men do and suffer, what they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also *how* man act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine—in short, processes of *experiencing*.⁹

For Dewey, "individuality" is not quantitative: it is neither a pre-social potential nor a kind of isolating discreteness. Rather, it is qualitative, arising through distinctive service to one's community. Individuality is "the realization of what we specifically are as distinct from others,"¹⁰ a realization that can only take place within the context of a flourishing communal life. "Individuality cannot be opposed to association," said Dewey. "It is through association that man has acquired his individuality, and it is through association that he exercises it."¹¹ An individual so construed is not a "thing," but an "event," describable in the language of uniqueness, integrity, social activity, relationality, and qualitative achievement.

How radical is Dewey in this social construction of the person? He certainly rejects the idea that the human being is in any way complete outside of the association one has with other people. But does he go too far in claiming that "Apart from the ties which bind him [the human being] to others, he is nothing?"¹² As James Campbell observes, this passage is easily and often misunderstood as a negation of the individual.¹³ But as we have seen with Dewey's notion of emergent "individuality," to say that persons are irreducibly social is for Dewey not to deny the integrity, uniqueness, and diversity of human beings; on the contrary, it is precisely to affirm these conditions.

In commenting on Dewey and the social processes in which persons are created, Campbell avers Aristotle's vocabulary of potential and actual:

Dewey's point is not just that what was potential becomes actual when provided with the proper conditions, as, for example, the growth of a seed into a plant is sometimes understood (Cf. LW 9:195-96). His point is rather that persons

are incomplete without a social component and develop into what they are—individual members of groups, socially grounded selves—in the ongoing process of living in a social environment.¹⁴

How does the community grow its persons? Dewey invests enormously in the centrality of language and other modes of communicative discourse (including signs, symbols, gestures, and social institutions):

Through speech a person dramatically identifies himself with potential acts and deeds; he plays many roles, not in successive stages of life but in a contemporaneously enacted drama. Thus mind emerges.¹⁵

For Dewey, mind is “an added property assumed by a feeling creature, when it reaches that organized interaction with other living creatures which is language, communication.”¹⁶ In reflecting on Dewey’s emergent mind, Westbrook observes that “it is not because they had minds that some creatures had language, but because they had language that they had minds.”¹⁷

For Dewey, then, heart-and-mind is created in the process of realizing a world. **Heart-and-mind like world is *becoming*** rather than *being*, and the question is how productive and enjoyable are we able to make this creative process. The way in which heart-and-mind and world are changed is not simply in terms of human attitude, but in real growth and productivity, and the efficiency and pleasure that attends it.

Dewey’s notion of “equality” is also evocative. As we would expect, given his qualitative notion of “individuality,” equality is active participation in communal life-forms which allows one the full contribution of all one’s unique abilities. **Commenting on this departure from the common meaning of the term**, Westbrook allows that Dewey

advocated neither an equality of result in which everyone would be like everyone else nor the absolutely equal distribution of social resources, . . .¹⁸

Dewey instead insists that:

Since actual, that is, effective rights and demands are products of interactions, and are not found in the original and isolated constitution of human nature, whether moral or psychological, mere elimination of obstructions is not enough.¹⁹

Equality so construed is not an original possession. Again, attaching a most unfamiliar interpretation to a familiar term, Dewey insists that

Equality does not signify that kind of mathematical or physical equivalence in virtue of which any one element may be substituted for another. It denotes effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique in each, irrespective of physical and psychological inequalities. It is not a natural possession but the fruit of the community when its action is directed by its character as a community.²⁰

In interpreting this passage, Raymond Boisvert underscores the fact that for Dewey, “equality is a result, a ‘fruit,’ not an antecedent possession.” It is growth in contribution. **Further**, like freedom, it has no meaning in reference to a discrete and independent person, and can only assume importance when “appropriate social interactions take place.” **Indeed**, equality is parity rather than identity. In Dewey’s own words, equality can only take place by

establishing the basic conditions through which and because of which every human being might become all that he was capable of becoming.²¹

Again Dewey offers a novel alternative to classical forms of teleology that, by definition, entail a means/end driven dialectic. In place of some predetermined and preassigned design, Dewey’s notion of ideals are aspirational ideas projected as meliorative goals for social action which “take shape and gain content as they operate in remaking conditions.”²² As Campbell observes,

For Dewey, ideals like *justice* or *beauty* or *equality* have all the power in human life that the proponents of ‘abstract,’ ‘fixed,’ or ‘remote’ senses of such ideals claim for them. The problem that he sees is with their interpretation, one that presents ideals as some sort of finished and unchanging Existents placed in a realm other than the natural world of hunger and death, secure from the problems and confusions of day-to-day existence. . . . Our ideals are connected to the ongoing processes of living: they are rooted in particular difficulties and draw upon presumptive solutions.²³

Without fixed ideals, how does disposition lead to action within a Deweyan world? For Dewey, it is not ideals that guide conduct as ends in themselves, but rather the direction comes from consummatory experiences in which such ideals are revealed. And consummatory experiences are themselves a shared expression of social intelligence dealing with unique situations as they may arise within the communicating community.

In process philosophy, change will not be denied. **And** relentless temporality vitiates any notion of perfection or completion. The world of experience entails genuine contingency and the emergent possibilities that

always changing circumstances produce. It is the pursuit of the as yet only possible that makes the end inhere in the means for achieving it.

Even human nature is not exempt from process. Dewey in presenting his understanding of human nature uses John Stuart Mill's individualism as his foil. He cites Mill at length, who claims that "all phenomena of society are phenomena of human nature;" that is, "human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from and may be resolved into the laws of the nature of individual man." While expressing appreciation for Mill's motives in liberating the common man from a powerful landed aristocracy, Dewey is unwilling to embrace his notion of person that for Dewey's is another example of "the philosophical fallacy."²⁴ In fact, Dewey wants to invert Mill's assumptions about the relationship between the person and the society. For Dewey, discussion of the fixed structure of human nature independent of particular social conditions is a non-starter because it "does not explain in the least the differences that mark off one tribe, family, people, from another—which is to say that in and of itself it explains no state of society whatever."²⁵ For Dewey, then,

. . . the alleged unchangeableness of human nature cannot be admitted. For while certain needs in human nature are constant, the consequences they produce (because of the existing state of culture—of science, morals, religion, art, industry, legal rules) react back into the original components of human nature to shape them into new forms. The total pattern is thereby modified. **The futility of exclusive appeal** to psychological factors both to explain what takes place and to form policies as to what *should* take place, would be evident to everybody—had it not proved to be a convenient device for "rationalizing" policies that are urged on other grounds by some group or faction.²⁶

For Dewey, the human being is a social achievement, an adaptive success made possible through the applications of social intelligence. Given the reality of change, this success is always provisional, leaving us as incomplete creatures with the always new challenge of contingent circumstances. And yet this success is progressive and programmatic. "We *use* our past experiences to construct new and better ones in the future."²⁷

In distinguishing the aristocratic model from democracy, Dewey is equally explicit about how the personal dimension expressed by notions such as "individuality" and "equality" are essential to the kind of harmony that defines a flourishing democracy, and about how the life-forms of the society are the stimuli and the media through which such personality is achieved:

In one word, democracy means that *personality* is the first and final reality. It admits that the full significance of personality can be learned by the individual only as it

is already presented to him in objective form in society; it admits that the chief stimuli and encouragements to the realization of personality come from society; but it holds, none the less, to the fact that personality cannot be procured for anyone else, however degraded and feeble, by any one else, however wise and strong.²⁸

As Westbrook observes, “The critical point is that, for Dewey, the relationship between the individual capacities and environments was one of *mutual* adjustment, not the one-sided accommodation of individual needs and powers to a fixed environment.”²⁹

CONFUCIUS

To pursue a comparison of the Deweyan conception of person with Confucius, we need some Confucian vocabulary. And if we allow with Wittgenstein that the limits of our language are the limits of our world, we need some more language.³⁰ We can begin with *ren* 仁 which we have chosen (to the chagrin of many) to translate as “authoritative conduct,” “to act authoritatively,” or “authoritative person.” *Ren* is the foremost project taken up by Confucius, and occurs over one hundred times in the *Analects*. It is a fairly simple graph, and according to the *Shuowen* lexicon, is made up of the elements *ren* 人 “person”, and *er* 二, the number “two.” This etymological analysis underscores the Confucian assumption that one cannot become a person by oneself—we are, from our inchoate beginnings, irreducibly social. Herbert Fingarette has stated the matter concisely: “For Confucius, unless there are at least two human beings, there can be no human beings.”³¹

An alternative explanation of the character *ren* we might derive from oracle bone inscriptions is that what appears to be the number “two” is in fact an early form of “above, to ascend *shang* 上”.³² Such a reading would highlight the growing distinction one accrues in becoming *ren*, thereby setting a bearing for one’s community and the world to come: “those authoritative in their humanity enjoy mountains . . . are still . . . [and] are long-enduring (*Analects* 6.23; see also 2.1 and 17.3).

Ren 仁 is most commonly translated as “benevolence,” “goodness,” and “humanity,” occasionally as “human-heartedness,” and less occasionally by the clumsy and sexist “manhood-at-its-best.” While “benevolence” and “humanity” might be more comfortable choices for translating *ren* into English, our decision to use the less elegant “authoritative person” is a considered one. First, *ren* is one’s entire person: one’s cultivated cognitive, aesthetic, moral, and religious sensibilities as they are expressed in one’s ritualized roles and relationships. It is one’s “field of selves,” the sum of significant relationships that constitute one as a resolutely social person. *Ren* is not only mental, but physical as well: one’s posture and comportment, gestures and bodily communication. Hence, translating *ren* as “benevolence” is to “psychologize” it in a tradition that does not rely upon the notion of *psyche* as a way of defin-

ing the human experience. It is to impoverish *ren* by isolating one out of many moral dispositions at the expense of so much more that comes together in the complexity of becoming human.

Again, “humanity” suggests a shared, essential condition of being human owned by all members of the species. Yet *ren* does not come so easy. It is an aesthetic project, an accomplishment, something done (12.1). The human *being* is not something we are; it is something that we do, and become. Perhaps “human *becoming*” might thus be a more appropriate term to capture the processional and emergent nature of what it means to become human. It is not an essential endowed potential, but what one is able to make of oneself given the interface between one’s initial conditions and one’s natural, social, and cultural environments. Certainly the human being as a focus of constitutive relationships has an initial disposition (17.2). But *ren* is foremost the process of “growing (*sheng* 生)” these relationships into vital, robust, and healthy participation in the human community.

The fact that Confucius is asked so often what he means by the expression *ren* would suggest that he is reinventing this term for his own purposes, and that those in conversation with him are not comfortable in their understanding of it. Confucius’ creative investment of new meaning in *ren* is borne out by a survey of its infrequent, and relatively unimportant usage in the earlier classical corpus. *Ren* is further ambiguous because it denotes the qualitative transformation of a *particular* person, and can only be understood relative to the specific, concrete conditions of that person’s life. There is no formula, no ideal. Like a work of art, it is a process of disclosure rather than closure, resisting fixed definition and replication.

Our term “authoritative person” as a translation of *ren* then, is a somewhat novel expression, as was *ren* itself, and will probably prompt a similar desire for clarification. “Authoritative” entails the “authority” that a person comes to represent in community by becoming *ren*, embodying in oneself the values and customs of one’s tradition through the performance of ritual propriety (*li* 禮). The prominence and visibility of the authoritative person is captured in the metaphor of the mountain (6.23): still, stately, spiritual, enduring, a landmark of the local culture and community, a bearing for those who have lost their way.

At the same time, the way of becoming human (*dao* 道) is not a given; the authoritative person must be a “road-builder,” a participant in “authoring” the culture for one’s own place and time (15.29). Observing ritual propriety (*li*) is, by definition, a process of internalization—“making the tradition one’s own”—requiring personalization of the roles and relationships that locate one within community. It is this creative aspect of *ren* that is implicit in the process of becoming authoritative for one’s own community. The contrast between top-down and impositional “authoritarian” order, and the bottom-up, deferential sense of “authoritative” order is also salutary. The authoritative person is a model that others, recognizing the achievement, gladly and without coercion, defer to and appropriate in the construction of their own personhood. Confucius is explicit in expressing the same reservations about

authoritative relations becoming authoritarian as he has about a deference-driven ritualized community surrendering this non-coercive structure for the rule of law (2.3).

A second Confucian term that has relevance in our comparison with Dewey is *xin* 心, translated as “heart-and-mind.” The character *xin* is a stylized pictograph of the aorta, associating it quite immediately with the “heart” and the emotional connotations that attend it. The fact that the character *qing* 情 that we translate as “emotions” or “feelings” is a combination of this *xin* 心 and a phonetic element, *qing* 青, justifies this understanding. In fact, many if not most of the characters that entail “feeling” have *xin* as a component element.

However, given that *xin* has as often been rendered as “mind” should alert us to the inadequacy of simply translating it as “heart.” Many if not most of the characters that refer to different modalities of “thinking” are also constructed with *xin* as a component. Indeed, there are many passages in the classical Chinese texts that would not make sense in English unless the *xin* *thinks* as well as *feels*. The point of course is that in this classical Chinese world view, the mind cannot be divorced from the heart. The cognitive is inseparable from the affective. To avoid such a dichotomy, we translate *xin* rather inelegantly as “heart-and-mind” with the intention of reminding ourselves that there are no altogether rational thoughts devoid of feeling, nor any raw feelings altogether lacking in cognitive content.

In the classical Chinese world view, process and change have priority over substance and permanence. Thus, it is frequently observed that, with respect to the human body, physiology has priority over anatomy, and function takes precedence over site. This being the case, it might well be argued that *xin* means “thinking and feeling,” and then derivatively and metaphorically, the organ with which these experiences are to be associated.

Since feelings define the quality of one’s interactions, the proper expression of such feelings is a singularly important value in early Confucian conception of person. *Qing* 情 is “what something really is” in the sense that the relatively unmediated experience itself resides in affective transactions that become selective and abstract when reduced to the cognitive structures of language. It is to the concreteness of affective experience that Whitehead nods when he observes that “. . . mothers can ponder many things in their hearts that words cannot express.” *Qing* takes on particular importance in the *Zhongyong* 中庸 because of the dramatic role that properly focused human affect is assumed to have on cosmic order. As the *Zhongyong* 1 discussion of emotions concludes: “When equilibrium and focus is sustained and harmony is fully realized, the heavens and earth maintain their proper places and all things flourish in the world.”

Again, *qing* is important in understanding the radically contextualized and perspectival nature of human co-creativity itself. Because persons are constituted by their relationships, and because these relationships are valorized in the process of bringing their fields of experience into focus, the creative interactions among such persons disclose their feelings for one another, and

for their environs. Affective tone and the subjective form of feeling are always entailed in the uniquely perspectival locus of the creative process.

The last Confucian term that we might want to explore briefly is *he* 和, conventionally translated “harmony.” The etymology of the term is culinary. Harmony is the art of combining and blending two or more foodstuffs so that they mutually enhance one another without losing their distinctive flavors. Throughout the early corpus, the preparation of food is appealed to as a gloss on this sense of elegant harmony. Harmony so considered entails both the integrity of the particular ingredient and its ease of integration into some larger whole, where integrity is to be understood as “*becoming* whole in relationships” rather than “*being* whole.” Signatory of this harmony is the endurance of the particular ingredients and the aesthetic nature of the harmony. Such harmony is an elegant order that emerges out of the collaboration of intrinsically related details to embellish the contribution of each one.

In the *Analects*, this sense of harmony is celebrated as the highest cultural achievement. Here, harmony is distinguished from mere agreement by defining it in terms of eliciting the optimum contribution of each particular to its context. The family metaphor pervades this text, encouraged by the intuition that this is the institution in which the members usually give themselves most fully and unreservedly to the group nexus, in interactions that are governed by those observances (*li* 禮) most appropriate (*yi* 義) to the occasion. Such a commitment to family requires the full expression of personal integrity, and thus becomes the context in which one can most effectively pursue personal realization. The two passages in the *Analects* that best express the inseparability of ritual life-forms and personal contribution in the achievement of communal harmony are:

Achieving harmony (*he* 和) is the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety (*li* 禮). In the ways of the Former Kings, this achievement of harmony through observing propriety made them elegant, and was a guiding standard in all things large and small. But when things are not going well, to realize harmony just for its own sake without regulating the situation through observing ritual propriety will not work. (1.12)

Yan Hui inquired about authoritative conduct (*ren* 仁). The Master replied, “Through self-discipline and observing ritual propriety (*li* 禮) one becomes authoritative in one’s conduct. If for the space of a day one were able to accomplish this, the whole empire would defer to this authoritative model. Becoming authoritative in one’s conduct is self-originating—how could it originate with others?”

Yan Hui said, “Could I ask what becoming authoritative entails?” The Master replied, “Do not look at anything that

violates the observance of ritual propriety; do not listen to anything that violates the observance of ritual propriety; do not speak about anything that violates the observance of ritual propriety; do not do anything that violates the observance of ritual propriety.” (12.1)

In the *Zhongyong*, this Confucian sense of harmony (*he* 和) is further stipulated with the introduction of “focus” or “equilibrium” (*zhong* 中) as in “focusing (*zhong* 中) the familiar in the affairs of the day (*yong* 庸).”

While achieved harmony does entail a kind of transformation, it is specifically a transformation of the quality of human life in the ordinary business of the day that not only elevates and inspires our daily transactions, but further extends radially to enchant the world. Human consummation has religious dividends. The cosmos is wider and deeper when human feeding is elevated to haute cuisine; when stick markings are disciplined into fine calligraphy and breathtaking bronze designs; when coarse gestures are refined to become the sober cadence of ceremony and the exhilaration of the dance; when grunting interventions are amplified into sublime and haunting melody; when the heat of random copulation becomes the constant and reassuring warmth of hearth and family. It is this transformation—the ordinary and everyday made elegant—that seems at least in part to provide the mystery and sense of ultimate value that other religious expressions find in some transcendent, supernatural appeal.

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NOTES

1. *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead* as recorded by Lucien Price. (New York: Mentor Books, 1954):145.

2. It is true as Raymond Boisvert in *John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998) reports that in the first part of the twentieth century, American philosophers were honored in both Europe and Asia, but whatever influence there was had certainly disappeared before the Second World War. In the United States itself, Harvey Townsend in his *Philosophical Ideas in the United States* (New York: The American Book Company, 1934):1 reports on the status of American philosophy during his generation:

American philosophy is a neglected study in America. This is due, at least in part, to an apologetic deference to things European. The call of Emerson and Whitman to Americans to think their own thoughts and sing their own songs is still too often unheeded. It has not entirely convinced Americans that they have a soul of their own.

More than two generations later, this bias is still in evidence. In the *Preface to The Oxford History of Western Philosophy* (1994), referring to the authors of the various sections of the text, the general editor Anthony Kenny reports that “all the authors belong to the Anglo-American style of philosophy in the sense that they have been trained in or have taught in, that tradition.” In the body of the work itself, however, there is no mention of American thought—no Edwards, Emerson, Peirce, James, or Dewey. The only references to anything American are recorded in the Index as “American Revolution, and Burke.” “Thomas Paine” and “Jefferson” are indexed—the latter mentioned in the text as “a friend of Paine.” The ostensive conclusion is that American philosophy, even as assessed by Anglo-American thinkers, has had a no real effective role in shaping the character of Western thought. Indeed, there are few undergraduate and graduate programs in America in which one can receive serious and sustained training in distinctly American philosophy. Not unlike the Russo-Japanese war fought exclusively on Chinese soil, American universities are currently the terrain on which turf-battles are being waged between essentially foreign powers.

3. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985):11.

4. Dewey from early on saw as “the most pervasive fallacy of philosophical thinking” the error of ignoring the historical, developmental, and contextualizing aspects of experience. The methodological problem as he saw it is “the abstracting of some one element from the organism which gives it meaning, and setting it up as absolute” and then proceeding to revere this one element “as the cause and ground of all reality and knowledge.” (EW1:162). For the history, development, and the context of “the philosophical fallacy,” see J.E. Tiles, *Dewey: The Arguments of the Philosophers* series. (London: Routledge, 1988):19-24.

5. In 1919 Dewey was hosted by his Columbia students such as Hu Shi and Jiang Moulin, who had since their return to China risen to prominence both professionally and as reformers in the New Culture Movement. Over a two year period, Dewey lectured all over China, and was much reported upon in the new vernacular press. Robert Clopton and Tsuin-chen Ou in *John Dewey: Lectures in China 1919-1920* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1973):13 report that “Dewey did not gain followers among the professional philosophers on the faculties of Chinese universities, most of whom continued to follow the German and French schools of philosophy in which they had been trained in Europe.” Given the difficult times, Dewey’s ideas were ostensibly “misread” by an activist audience in such a way as to have more influence on the current social and political needs than they did on professional philosophy, a “misreading” that one can only assume Dewey would have condoned if not encouraged. See Gu Hongliang’s 顧紅亮 *Shiyong zhuyi de wudu: Duwei zhexue dui Zhongguo xiandai zhexue de yingxiang* 實用主義的誤讀：杜威哲學對中國現代哲學的影響 (A misreading of pragmatism: The influence of Dewey’s philosophy on modern Chinese philosophy) (Shanghai: Huadong Normal University Press, 2000). See also Zhang Baogui’s 張寶貴

Duwei yu Zhongguo 杜威與中國 (Dewey and China) (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Peoples Press, 2001).

6. See *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991):147-49.

7. In a manuscript on the history of American philosophy that David Hall was working on before his death he is intent on interpreting Jonathan Edwards as one of the principal architects of the American sensibility. In rehearsing aspects of Edwards' philosophical reflections, Hall begins by claiming that Edwards circumvents the modern problematic of subjectivity and self-consciousness in any of its familiar modes by proposing a model of individuality that is not predicated upon either knowing, acting or making as subject-centered. In fact, the dissolution of the subject is a function of the development in Edwards of a process vision of the world as an alternative to substance modes of thinking. Further, this process philosophy is informed by a dispositional ontology that understands natural and supernatural processes in terms of inclinations or habits of response that are to be normatively understood as inclinations toward or responses to beauty. For Edwards, the communication of beauty is the defining feature of both the Divine and Human realms. And for Hall, the de-subjectification of the individual by appeal to a processive, dispositional ontology, and the movement of beauty and the aesthetic sensibility from the margins to the center qualify Edwards to serve as an original American thinker.

8. *Middle Works* 10:46.

9. *Later Works* 1:18.

10. *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (1891), *Early Works* 3:304.

11. "Lecture Notes: Political Philosophy, 1892," p. 38, *Dewey Papers*.

12. *Later Works* 7:323.

13. James Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1995):53-55.

14. Campbell (1995):40.

15. *Later Works* 1:135.

16. *Experience and Nature* p. 133.

17. Westbrook (1991):336.

18. Westbrook (1991):165.

19. *Later Works* 3:99.

20. *Middle Works* 12:329-30.

21. *Later Works* 11:168. For Boisvert's discussion, see (1998):68-9.

22. John Dewey, *The Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993):87.

23. Campbell (1995):152-3.

24. Tiles cites Dewey: "Personality, selfhood, subjectivity are eventual functions that emerge with complexly organized interactions, organic and social. Personal individuality has its basis and conditions in simpler events." (LW1:162) And from this Tiles infers that Dewey "will accuse those who assume individual human beings are constituted as conscious rational beings

prior to, or independently of, their entering into social relations, of committing ‘the philosophic fallacy.’” Tiles (1988):21.

25. Dewey (1993):223.

26. Dewey (1993):223-4.

27. *Middle Works* 12:134.

28. *Early Works* 1:244.

29. Westbrook (1991):43.

30. The explanation of this Confucian vocabulary is a revision of the glossaries of terms in Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 1998) and Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001).

31. Herbert Fingarette, “The Music of Humanity in the Conversations of Confucius” in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 10, p. 217.

32. Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950):191.

Part III

The Hindu and Buddhist Traditions

Chapter XII

Transmigration in the 21st Century, or the Future of an Illusion

Michel Hulin

The idea of souls transmigrating from body to body, through a long series of rebirths, has been among the earliest documented and most widespread beliefs of humankind. Furthermore, it has become customary in Europe since the end of the nineteenth century to associate this belief with Hinduism and Buddhism, so that its archaic character is seen to go hand in hand with a certain exoticism. This does not mean that Western theological or philosophical thought has remained unacquainted with this idea¹ -- in fact, quite the contrary, it has always been there. But in the West, at least until very recently, it could not escape remaining rather marginal in the face of the uninterrupted domination of Christianity, whose innermost tendencies have consistently taken it in a quite different, if not opposite, direction.

Nowadays, however, various signs lead us to think that this state of things is in the process of changing, and with surprising speed. A whole series of polls or surveys, conducted at regular intervals throughout the last quarter of the 20th century, especially in the English speaking world, converge to highlight the fact that this belief in reincarnation has been gaining ground at lightning speed. In Great Britain, for instance, the belief would today be shared by over a quarter of the adult population (as compared with 5% in 1974).² We must certainly guard against taking these quantitative data too literally. As the very idea of reincarnation can be interpreted in quite different ways, "believing" or "not believing" in it would necessarily embrace a wide range of shades of meaning which would remain in principle ungraspable by any questionnaires, given their relative lack of subtlety.

However, there is no doubt as to the general direction in which the collective paradigm is heading, all the more so since the results of these surveys are corroborated by a multiplicity of convergent clues -- in the first place, by proliferation of a literature devoted to these issues and the success it has had with the public. Well known individuals who in other epochs, fearing to be branded heretics or simply for fear of ridicule, would have kept these confidences private, do not hesitate nowadays to parade their previous lives. The media: radio, television, even the cinema (let us recall Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*) have also been eagerly taking up this theme.

Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century and at the very heart of the Western world, the idea of transmigration, while not yet mainstream, strictly speaking, is being taken seriously by an ever increasing number of people. Are we simply witnessing a fad, something more or less superficial and ephemeral? Or is a much broader and deeper change of mentality taking place? We shall here suggest some tentative responses to this question.

At first sight, the most likely answer would be to see the phenomenon as simply one particular topic among the many metaphysical and religious themes originating in Buddhism and Brahmanism. After all, already in Antiquity, India was regarded as the land of transmigration (Skt: *samsara*) par excellence. But can we really see this ideology of reincarnation which is becoming more and more widespread here, as a faithful copy or simple adaptation of the classical doctrine of *samsara*, or does it rather emerge from a wholly different intention?

KARMA AND SAMSARA IN THE EAST

In traditional India, belief in successive rebirths is, so to speak, taken for granted. That is to say that it never appears to be the outcome of any specific thought processes. It is the very opposite of a conscious, deliberate stand which would be taken by this or that person individually. People are raised in this belief and are imbued with it from a young age, so much that the very idea of questioning this belief is very likely to not even occur to them during their entire life. For them, it is more a matter of what is sensibly obvious than an article of faith.³ Hindus or Buddhists do not “believe” in transmigration in the sense that Christians believe, or are expected to believe, in the resurrection of the flesh. They seem to have a vivid, intense perception of it in spite of its obscurity. Many among them, for instance, will affirm that they can feel on their shoulders the “burden” of their accumulated previous lives. Moreover they are never seen to be searching for clues, omens or evidence.

Another typical feature of Indian transmigration is the essentially ethical character of the mechanism which it obeys. This is the principle of *karma*. This term, which originally indicated sacrifice or ritual action, ended up applying to any human behavior one could qualify in terms of good or evil, or conformity or not with the *dharma*, i.e. the just order of things. Righteous action will earn its doer a “merit” (*punya*) which will bear fruit either in this life or in a future existence, in the form of various satisfactions: enjoyments, honors, wealth etc. In the same way, unjust action results in a demerit (*papman*), which then brings multiple sufferings in this life or in another yet to come. And as there is an obvious link between the hierarchy of social conditions and that of satisfactions which individuals can expect from existence, the principle of *karma* will find expression in the first place through rebirths more or less noble or miserable, according to the overall ethical quality of deeds done during previous lives. This same tenet will also, in addition, determine multiple secondary factors contributing to happiness or unhappiness such as gender, physical constitution, robust or frail, and the seemingly fortunate or unfortunate encounters throughout one’s life. And so what we have here is an absolute principle of immanent justice, although often delayed in its concrete actualization: sooner or later, everyone will have the experiences they deserve. An Indian saying states that an action will indeed find its way back to its doer even at the other end of the world, as surely as a cow will recognize its calf among a thousand others. We can take for granted that such a tenet, by

stifling all attempts to fight “social injustice,” has helped in a powerful way to strengthen the hereditary caste hierarchy. Moreover, by thus eliminating the scandal of “the just who suffer,” Indians have been spared having to grapple with the eternal problem of evil, which has for so long -- and nowadays more than ever -- haunted European consciousness.

However, human rebirths on the various levels of the social order, from the untouchables to the brahmins, are not all that is at stake here. The distinctive feature of Indian *samsara* is indeed its unfolding on a cosmic scale on a huge “ladder of sentient beings,” where humankind occupies only the middle rung. Above stand a host of superior beings: the countless gods, spirits and demi-gods constituting the pantheon of Hindu and Buddhist mythologies. Underneath come the animals, remote from humans in varying degrees, then plants and minerals. Although there are many subtle differences of opinion on this point, the predominant view is indeed that “souls” are not once and for all either divine, human, or animal etc., but may assume any one of these conditions according to their *karma*. Thus it is possible, in the course of boundless time, to either rise to the rank of the gods, or to fall back into the misery and anonymity of the most insignificant of creatures. In all this, the human condition, however average or mediocre it be on the hierarchical scale, nonetheless remains a privileged one. All schools indeed are agreed in regarding this condition as the only one within which souls can act to shape their own future in one way or the other. “Above,” the gods are too immersed in the delights of their heavenly existence to be likely to wish any alteration of their fate. And so they quietly and passively wait for their merits, which have earned them the exalted condition they are presently enjoying, to be exhausted. “Below,” creatures are too sluggish, too paralyzed by the relative coarseness of their organs, to be able to discriminate between what is just and what is unjust. And so they are restless, constantly tossed between desire and fear, but they do not act strictly speaking, and thus do not generate any new good or bad *karma*, since this remains the privilege of humankind. Thus the tenet of *karma* appears poles apart from any fatalistic doctrine, inasmuch as it leads us to consider the statistically rare human condition as a precious opportunity given to souls to influence the course of their destiny. The transmigrating condition can thus be lived in a cheerful, affirmative, optimistic way, seen from the vantage point of this privileged human condition. The way indeed is all laid out: it will be enough in this world to abide by one’s *dharma* in the most scrupulous way to retain, if not increase, in one’s next existence, the advantages one already enjoys in this life. The untouchable himself, proclaims the Bhagavad Gita, will better his fate in his next life if he lawfully complies with the humble “duty of his stage of life” (*svadharma*).⁴ And indeed it is hardly disputable that the moral life of the great majority of Indians nowadays still rests on the hopeful expectation of a better future rebirth, which is of course offset by the fear of a decline caused by certain demerits which one would not or could not have avoided in this lifetime.

In spite of it all, the deeper meaning of the Indian ideas of *karma* and *samsara* is to be sought in another direction -- the one revealed by the pres-

ence, in the midst of traditional society, of individuals called “renunciants” (*sannyasin*) among the Hindus, and “mendicant monks” (*bhikkhu*) among the Buddhists, figures whose immense prestige is linked to the very fact of their adopting a thoroughly negative attitude towards *saṃsāra*. The avowed goal of their asceticism is indeed not to be born ever again, to extricate oneself some day, once and for all, from this perpetual round of reincarnations, which they feel as bondage -- in a word, to reach final liberation (*mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*). This attitude which views any form of attachment to life, even in respecting one’s *dharma*, as the expression of a blind desire and an ignorance of the true metaphysical calling of man, thus rendering on social life a globally “pessimistic” judgment, has left a lasting stamp on the whole of Indian civilisation. For more than two millennia, India has cultivated the image of transmigration as an aimless wandering, from birth to birth, in pursuit of the mirage of an inaccessible earthly happiness.

KARMA AND SAMSARA IN THE WEST

Turning towards the Western reality of today, we shall ask whether it is possible, and if so, to what extent, to find there the characteristic features of Indian *karma* and *saṃsāra*. We will note first a certain similarity of language, sometimes even a true mimesis in terminology. Not only is the idea of *karma* itself regularly mentioned without always feeling the need of clarifying, but also certain more technical notions are being used in a casual way. For instance, Brahmanic philosophy was very early on led to ponder the fact that the *ātman* (the “Self”) -- itself outside space and time -- could not strictly speaking transmigrate, that is to say move through space and evolve through time. In search of the real transmigrating principle, it had been led to postulate the presence, inside the ordinary visible body, of a second body, also material but made of a certain subtle matter making it imperceptible as well as invulnerable to the operation of the gross physical agents (fire, water, etc.). It is to this subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra* or *liṅga-śarīra*) that the *atman* would come to attach itself, under the sway of delusion, its connection to the ordinary gross body being effected only through this subtle body, and secondarily. It is there that the traces left by the course of experience -- emotions, memories, habits, and acquired dispositions (*saṃskāra* and *vasānā*) -- would come to be imprinted. And it is this same subtle body which, surviving at death the destruction of the gross body, would then implant itself in a newly formed embryo (following certain complex and abstruse procedures which have given rise to many a discussion between schools), thus assuring the transmigratory continuity of an individual existence, biological as well as psychological.

These same diverse notions are to be found again among Western transmigrationists today. The subtle body becomes for them, probably with the aid of spiritualism, which, one century earlier, had taken over this vocabulary, the “astral body” or “fluidic body” or else “etheric.” The only novelty here is probably the sporadic manifestation of a certain technological ambition quite characteristic of our times, which claims to detect in an objective

way this subtle or etheric body with the help, by the way, of a whole jumble of scientific equipment (spectrometers, interferometers, Geiger counters, Kirlian photographic procedures). In the same way, the concepts of *vasānā* and *saṃskāra* are today in common usage in these circles, probably due to the mass diffusion of Yoga in the West over the last thirty years and to a certain popularization of Freudian psychoanalysis which gives great importance to the notion of traces deposited “in the unconscious” by various traumatic childhood experiences.

COMPARISONS: EAST AND WEST

But language is not everything, and the same notions can be invoked, the same formulas used, without the final message being identical for all that. And this, so it seems, is precisely what is occurring here. The first difference -- which in fact implies all the others -- is that transmigrationist beliefs, on the one hand, remain marginal in our civilisation, in spite of their swiftly gaining ground and, on the other hand, are always the result of individual initiatives, even if these occur, here and there, within the framework of a sect or small group. In other words, in the modern West these beliefs are neither backed by strong collective support nor rooted in a powerful religious and philosophical tradition. Those who take them up are thus aware of being pioneers, breaking new ground at their own risk. But what is it that pushes them to go this way? Here there can be little doubt about the answer. If, in this early twenty-first century, belief in reincarnation seems to be in a position to conquer the West, it is because it appears to be carrying a message of hope. The vast literature devoted nowadays to the subject is, almost unintentionally, evidence of this. The prospect of a perhaps unlimited succession of future births, far from frightening our contemporaries, reassures them, for it presents itself to them above all as a promise of eternal life. Indeed for them, the choice is no longer between Heaven or Hell, salvation or damnation, but rather between pure and simple annihilation and reincarnation, however hypothetical and difficult to imagine it might be.

Thus contemporary neo-transmigrationist ideology appears nondissociable from what it tends to replace: the old Christian eschatology of the Resurrection of the Flesh and Last Judgment. We shall return to this point later, but it is important right now to emphasize how remote these views are from traditional Indian conceptions. The Indians, or at least the most lucid among them, do not fear the obliteration of their ego at death, but, quite to the contrary, its indefinite perpetuation. To recall a famous metaphor, *samsara* appears to them as “the Great Ocean, whose waves are the ever recurring delusions and sufferings.” Therefore they yearn to cross it once and for all in order to settle on “the other shore” of Liberation. And here we are poles apart from Western reincarnationism, which virtually ignores the very notion of Liberation and puts all its hopes into the indefinite prolongation of a series of rebirths yet to come.

Similar divergences show up as soon as one has to determine both the content and the meaning, as well as the possible end of the series of rebirths. The Indian view holds that the content encompasses all of the beings who populate the cosmos. All are supposed to be part of the vast movement of transmigration, and each one of them is supposed to be able to assume, in one phase or another of their destiny, any one of the possible conditions of reincarnation. This implies that there is no migratory stream flowing in one privileged direction, but only one vast disorderly fluctuation within which no irreversible transformation is ever looming, even in the long term. Sentient beings are tossed around indefinitely, now ascending, now descending the ladder of beings, according to their deeds. The gods themselves are very likely, once their merits are exhausted, to find themselves confined once more for millions of years in the miserable, repetitive existences of insects, worms, etc. The only irreversible movement conceivable within such a universe is precisely that which, taking human existence as a springboard, finds its outcome in Liberation. But if Liberation in one sense can be seen as the “natural locus” of the soul, nevertheless the soul was not promised Liberation from the beginning of time, was not for ever destined to it. Therefore no sentient being is ever granted its salvation in advance. All risk seeing their imprisonment in the labyrinth of *samsara* indefinitely prolonged, thus giving it a properly infernal character.

In contemporary Western presentations, on the contrary, it is almost always a matter of a directed future which is globally ascending. As a result, the possibility of animal rebirths will be either expressly denied or passed over in silence, or else in the best of cases relegated to an antediluvian past forever done with.⁵ The more glamorous prospect of *post-mortem* ascensions towards mysterious supra-human conditions, on remote planets or in extra-galactic spaces worthy of science-fiction, is on the contrary easily envisioned.⁶ The uppermost idea in all this is really that of life-lessons: one comes back to the world, on Earth or elsewhere, less to atone for past misdeeds than to work out unresolved psychical conflicts, or in order to better assimilate various moral or religious truths. At times there may be a real mission to be accomplished, by beings who have “reached a higher plane of evolution” and who come back among us in order to teach. Even the seeming lapses are no exception to this rule. The fashion designer Paco Rabane, for instance, believes he knows why he once reincarnated in the eighteenth century as a woman of easy virtue: “Having often (*sic*) been a priest, endowed with a certain power upon the minds of others, I was beginning to dry up. My heart had become callous, insensitive to my brothers’ sufferings. In order to be uplifted, I had to know the fate of Marie-Madeleine. I had to suffer the humiliation, the degradation, the public opprobrium.”⁷ In short, where traditional India imagines a truly hellish circle or cycle, the West is prone to imagine a sort of ascending spiral through which individual destinies would seem to be drawn and, passing through a thousand seeming catastrophes and tragedies, to be led ever nearer to the divine.

EXPLANATIONS AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF TRANSMIGRATION

We have already said that Indian religious consciousness never felt the need to prove to itself the objective reality of transmigration (just as to this day for the great majority of us it seems unnecessary to build up proof for the immediate intuition we have of our present life as unique and nonrepeatable). It is quite another matter for modern supporters of reincarnation, precisely because they have to struggle against a collective belief or unquestioned feeling which, quite the opposite, asserts that "one lives only once." This evidence, these signs or clues, which nineteenth-century spiritualists sought through levitating tables, our contemporaries believe they can find in past-life memories, be they spontaneous or induced. In this regard there exist, in fact, two distinct approaches.

One of these wishes to be scientific and objective. It rests on the fact that in some regions of the globe and within certain milieus, some individuals, generally children or adolescents, suddenly "recognize" places which as a rule they are visiting for the first time, calling by name perfect strangers whom they pass in the street, listing the tastes, opinions, and character traits of people deceased well before they themselves were born -- people unknown in their milieu -- drawing a precise picture of long past events, generally tragic (old crimes, etc.), which they would not have been able to witness or hear about from anybody. It is then a matter of investigating on the spot, both as sleuth and as historian, scrutinizing the consistency of these stories, checking the alleged facts, the validity of the alleged evidence, etc., in order to eliminate all possibility of hoaxes or the presence of parallel sources of information which, in good faith, might not have been detected. In the small number of cases where the phenomenon does not yield to any of the many attempts at a "non-supernatural" explanation, the hypothesis of reincarnation can then, according to the advocates of this approach, be cautiously, tentatively advanced to account for them. Such is the method followed notably by the American Ian Stevenson and his followers. It does not assert the reality of reincarnation in a dogmatic way, but only its plausibility "in the present state of science."⁸

The second approach is internal. One might see in it the extrapolation of some methods of investigating the unconscious, all more or less directly derived from psychoanalysis (free association, directed dreaming, hypnotic suggestion, primal scream, etc.). The idea of using these methods to uncover possible previous lives was, it seems, induced by two main factors. On the one hand, it was found possible to return in memory well beyond generally accepted limits (age 3-4), back to very early infancy and even to the intra-uterine state. On the other hand, the setting up of new reanimation techniques allowed many patients to be brought back to life who in the past would have been legitimately regarded as dead. Their testimony, whatever interpretation one may give to it, suggests that at both extreme ends of life, consciousness, far from being extinguished, on the contrary sees its powers exalted. Thus one could emphasize a certain continuity of the stream of consciousness from

the very first moments of life (how many have thus relived, or thought they relived, the “trauma” of their birth!), to the moment of its seeming extinction. The idea that consciousness would suddenly appear, in a miraculous way, at the very instant of birth in order to disappear, in not less sudden a fashion, at the instant of death, became thus less and less plausible. From then on, the way was open for tentative explorations of this stream of consciousness even beyond the limits of one’s present existence, and the very ancient notion of “previous lives” came to give these still budding researches a made-to-order frame of reference.

We shall not recall here the history of this research, flourishing by the way as much in Europe as in the United States. Even today their achievements may seem fairly impressive. The methods of anamnesis are quite varied, and so are the practitioners: psychologists, psychoanalysts, clergy, physicians, gurus more or less famous, etc. Some use hypnosis, others deep relaxation, others suggestion within an adequate sensorial environment; a few do not hesitate to make use of hallucinogenic drugs like LSD. The purpose of these “trips” is most often therapeutic, at least at the beginning: searching the very remote prenatal past for the origin of phobias, self-defeating patterns, and even organic troubles for which one finds no plausible explanation within the context of the present existence. But exploring the pre-empirical past can also become an end in itself. It is then, each time, a delving into the unknown: the subject can never know in advance in which of his countless previous lives he is going to “land.” He soon finds himself confronted with visions and involved in scenes which he has first to locate in space and time before attempting to figure out their meaning. His “guide” tries to help him by asking questions such as: “Can you describe your body?” (male or female, young or old, etc.), “What kind of clothes do you wear?”, “Which language speak the people around you?”, “Are they friendly or hostile towards you?”, etc. Thus the evocation takes shape, and the subject really has the impression of reliving some episode, generally colourful and dramatic, of one of his previous lives. Tens of thousands of similar “trips” may thus already have been taken, most of them duly recorded on tape! And so we shall not be surprised to hear the supporters of these methods claiming publicly that reincarnation is today no longer a matter of belief but of direct experience.

If this were really the case, it is in fact, a complete shift of the religious consciousness, practically a metamorphosis of our civilization, that we would be facing. It is indeed all of our attitudes towards the future, towards work, love, politics, history which would be turned upside down if the reality of previous lives would become obvious or empirically verifiable by everyone. But we are not yet there, since a wide gap still separates the apparent content of these testimonies and the interpretation which some are eager to give. While going through these stories, indeed, one is struck to see that the previous lives thus brought back to the surface have nothing ordinary about them. That is, they are not very representative of what by necessity must have been the most common fate of humankind throughout the ages preceding our epoch. What do we know indeed of the large human groups who have popu-

lated the various continents during past centuries? How many were the tribes, ethnic groups, and peoples who left but very modest traces in history, and whose language, customs, rites, and beliefs are for ever buried in anonymity! Statistically, one should expect to see the re-emergence of countless destinies hard or impossible to identify, and belonging to this vast silent majority of humankind. Also, there should be plenty of lives of slaves, rural workers, maids, mercenaries, etc.

But the reality, if one can say so, is quite different. Simplifying somewhat, one can say that the destinies brought back to light by these diverse methods of anamnesis fall under two broad categories. First, what could be called emblematic functions or roles: high priests, high initiates, magi, wonder-workers, vestal priestesses, Druids, Templars, inquisitors, ministers, high class courtesans, etc. A high proportion, perhaps the majority of the lives thus exhumed, have as their setting ancient Egypt -- not surprisingly -- but also Aztec Mexico, the Court of Frederic II in Palermo, the holy city of Benares, etc., all places endowed with religious or esoteric prestige.

The second category appears at first sight more heterogeneous, and so less liable to criticism. We find here a jumble of lives of peasants, aristocrats, merchants, soldiers, etc., most of which seem to have been lived in Europe or the Mediterranean Basin. Yet if one takes a close look at them, one realizes that they too are all but ordinary. These are lives, or rather violent deaths, of typical figures corresponding, if not to clichés or naïve representations, at least to vignettes from children's history books: Roman legionaries grappling with Barbarians or Carthaginians, gladiators, slaves rebelling under Spartacus, Christians thrown to the lions in the arena, witches burnt at the stake, Crusaders lost in the Syrian desert and hunted by Saracens, pirates of the Southern seas, aristocrats guillotined under the Revolution, Napoleon's soldiers trapped in the retreat from Russia, or else, closer to us, deportees to Nazi concentration camps.⁹ On the other hand, vague, dull destinies, devoid of striking incidents, are lacking or under-represented. Moreover, the subjects never seem to run into historic episodes with which they would not be acquainted in their conscious culture, whose particulars would be unknown to them, and which they would need to identify afterwards by looking into dictionaries and encyclopedias. The outside observer is thus led to suspect that these subjects, far from uncovering authentic previous lives, are only projecting various emotional contents of their unconscious on certain emblematic, if not archetypal, situations, which their historic culture puts at their disposal. Without wanting to prematurely judge the possible therapeutic interest of these practices, it is difficult to see in them an experimental confirmation of the principle of reincarnation.

One would at first glance be tempted to take more seriously Ian Stevenson's investigations, inasmuch as he conducts them with meticulous thoroughness and in a highly critical spirit, which led him precisely to accept only a few among the thousands of cases that he dealt with. Stevenson shows that he is clearly aware of the possibilities of "rational" explanation, for example on the grounds of indirect suggestion and cryptomnesia.¹⁰ According

to him, only those cases which consistently resist such explanations, would be likely to “suggest” the reality of reincarnation. Two orders of facts, however, contribute to weakening this hypothesis. On the one hand, nearly all of Stevenson’s researches were conducted within cultural areas (India, Sri Lanka) or communities (The Druses of Lebanon) where transmigration is an unquestioned collective belief. There naturally results from this an unconscious and natural predisposition, on the part of the witnesses interviewed, to select their observations and to give their stories a slant which would agree with the general framework of reincarnation. One notes, on the other hand, that what is suspected to have been a given subject’s most recent past life always takes place within a radius of about 15-20 km. from his present residence. In the pure logic of moral retribution, of *karma*, this geographical limitation appears devoid of any justification. On the other hand it would agree fairly well with a sort of unconscious complicity, mutual osmosis among psyches, or at least partial interchangeability of gestures, spontaneous attitudes and reactions between people of the same religious group and especially of the same geographic region. It will be noticed, by the way, that Stevenson’s “external” approach and the “internal” approach of the gurus of anamnesis contradict each other more than they complete or support each other, inasmuch as the first favors a certain “local” style of reincarnation, whereas the second leads most often to remote and exotic previous lives.

By these few critical remarks -- which it would be of course possible to elaborate and systematize -- we do not mean, however, to reduce this collection of phenomena of “journeys through time” to a vast collective illusion, still less to a deliberate mystification. More accurately, we do not deem it possible to interpret them only in terms of true and false. In a way, everything that concerns the beyond is indeed as a rule unverifiable, inasmuch as any observation or measurement made within that realm would *ipso facto* make it part of this world here below. We will thus propose that these stories of previous lives are neither true nor untrue, but that their proliferation in our epoch must meet a certain need of the collective psyche. Let us not forget that man’s conscious life is incessantly surrounded by a cloud of psychic manifestations which remain an enigma for our understanding: dreams, hallucinations, auras, paramnesias, split personalities, impressions of “*deja vu*” etc. **The extreme plasticity of these phenomena makes them liable to very diverse interpretations.** Thus at certain times in cultural history, a need was felt to understand them in terms of messages emanating from the beyond. Religious literature of the Early Middle Ages, for example, is filled with apparitions and visionary stories: the damned, souls from Purgatory, and also saints, appear suddenly to a monk, a lord, or a humble maid, urging them to lead a more Christian life, warning them against this or that individual, predicting the day and circumstances of their own death, sometimes taking them to visit a region of Heaven or Hell.¹¹ These kinds of stories have grown more scarce through the centuries, have become less and less credible, and have finally completely disappeared. Their decline is the very decline of a certain Christian imagination, notably as to eschatology. And the vacuum which it has left behind is today

being engulfed by another Imagination, by another way of translating into visions and stories the same material - timeless like the human psyche itself - of paranormal experiences and altered states of consciousness.

Theoretical Understanding

The present surge of transmigrationist ideas in the Western world calls for, it seems, a historic perspective. It yields itself to interpretation only over the long term and from the perspective of the history of mentalities. What we witness today is indeed a resurgence, and not a radically new phenomenon. From the point of view of the historian and even more of the anthropologist, the eschatology of reincarnation has indeed always been that of the majority on the planet -- even if it has not assumed everywhere as "learned" and systematic a shape as in ancient India and in the countries of Buddhist civilization -- and it is much more the resurrectionist eschatology, peculiar to the three "religions of the Book": Judaism, Christianity, Islam, which represents the exception and the enigma. In Europe itself, transmigration is nothing new. Its extremely rich and complex history is today just beginning to be investigated in a systematic way. But in fact, a red thread, subtle but uninterrupted, connects Pythagoras and Empedocles¹² to Victor Hugo through Origenism, the Cathares, the Kabbala, Giordano Bruno, Lessing, Goethe, German Romanticism, etc. For a long time marginal, almost clandestine because reputed to be heretical, transmigration appears in broad daylight only around the end of the eighteenth century, with the gradual ossification of traditional Christian eschatology. From then on, and throughout the nineteenth century, a whole lineage of thinkers and writers would defend it from the perspective of a progressive and optimistic philosophy of history, their guiding principle being that the host of humans who died "too early", during the centuries of ignorance and barbarism, must be given the chance to be reborn from age to age in order to have their share of the human progress achieved after them.¹³ The contemporary curiosity for previous lives represents yet another version of this same belief, whose inflated individualism and narcissism can easily be explained by the collapse of progressivist dreams and the magnitude of the historic catastrophes of the twentieth century.

One could consider that the obviously fanciful, if not outright delirious, aspects which in many cases the new belief in transmigration reveals, are above all a sign of the mental disarray of those who adopt it, which would disqualify it in advance as a vision of the world which has a future. Nonetheless the history of religions gives us many examples of great spiritual movements which began in a confused turmoil of this kind, yet eventually led to enduring transformations of collective myths and practices. In fact it would seem that a spontaneous and unorganized change in attitudinal patterns almost always paves the way for the big shifts of conceptual thought. Most often, the impulse comes from below, and finds itself afterwards captured and molded by philosophical or theological reflection. Now in the present time, several objective factors seem to favor, over the middle and long term, a return to

the foreground of the idea of transmigration. These factors are of a theoretical, ethico-religious, and social order.

Indeed a certain image of the world, inherited in part from Antiquity, in part from the Middle Ages, constituted for a long time a natural framework for the eschatology of the Resurrection and Last Judgment. It set man apart, infinitely above the other living beings, and his habitat, the earth, at the center of the universe. It rested on a short time span of about a few thousand years between the creation and the end of the world. This image of the world is now outdated. Geocentrism was the first to collapse. Anthropocentrism followed, undermined on the one hand by the emphasis put, beginning with Darwin, on a real process of becoming human spread over at least three million years, and on the other hand, by ethology, which revealed the full extent of the behavioral kinship between man and certain higher animals. Finally, contemporary cosmology has moved back the coming to birth of the universe by 15 or 20 billion years, has left open the prospect of an unlimited future expansion of the universe, and in any case envisions a possible "end of the world" only billions of years from now, and this in such physical conditions that the event will no longer have any conceivable link with the waning of human history on the planet earth. The ancient doctrines of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism -- which were prone to see creatures transmigrating from world to world and embracing in succession all possible conditions against a background of boundless cosmic and at the same time "imaginary" space and time -- thus happen to be once again relevant, and to resonate as it never did in the past of Western culture.

Ethico-religious Understanding

But in addition to this theoretical interest there is also another, the ethico-religious. The conception, or rather *perception*, of human life as unique and nonrepeatable led inevitably to a "Manichean" eschatology of salvation and damnation, both final. The precise content of these last two representations could, within Christianity itself, vary in the course of the centuries; but their structural opposition was to maintain itself, in spite of its seeming alleviation by Limbo or Purgatory. Now, our contemporaries can hardly any longer support a religious anthropology which, without necessarily making a simplistic division of humankind into "good" and "evil," nonetheless admitted that ultimately or "in God's Judgment," some would see their misdeeds forgiven, but not others. Today, psychoanalysis and depth psychology in general have made us more sensitive to the infinite complexity of the human psyche, to the extreme ambiguity of the motivations behind any behavior, and to the determining role of chance events in shaping one's personality and crystallizing one's major life options. We are now prone to think that the meaning of a life is not exhausted by the materiality of its observable behaviors, that it is constantly evolving and is as if left hanging, up to the very instant when death arrives to arbitrarily freeze it as destiny. In short, we no longer really believe in the possibility, "even for God," of passing a final and irrevocable judgment,

one way or the other, on a life which has just ended. In a way, the “verdict” of transmigration, pronounced automatically, in the absence of any Supreme Judge, can appear more equitable to the extent that it supposedly takes into account one’s merits as well as demerits, distributes only relative, time-limited, punishments and rewards, and thus leaves open this field of possibilities, that of any human destiny, essentially unfinished at death.

Socio-ethical Understanding of Transmigration

A third motivating factor -- this time, of a social or socio-ethical order -- tends to induce a return to favor of the idea of reincarnation. The inequality of opportunity at birth, which has of course always and everywhere existed, is nowadays perceived more acutely than ever, and this at the very moment when throughout the world political powers, at least those among them that are not totalitarian, acknowledge they have at their disposal only palliative remedies in order to fight this evil. Here also, biology and the social sciences have played a role by highlighting the fact that it is very early, indeed in the very first years of life, that chances for success in life, in the conventional sense, can be jeopardized or else on the contrary, enhanced. It is known today that the young child’s diet conditions the maturation of his or her brain. A diet deficient in certain trace elements during the first 3 or 4 years will result for the adult in an irremediable intellectual deficit. A lack of sensory stimulation or affection will have a still more devastating impact. Now these different factors in turn obviously depend on the country of birth, historic conditions (peace or wartime), the parents’ social milieu, the relative harmony or discord in their relationship etc. On another level, the sociology of education emphasizes that children entering school do not rank equally; besides possible hereditary biological factors, the cultural environment in the home plays an important, some say decisive, background role with regard to their future academic success or failure.

Now these diverse sources of inequality are beginning to be seen in a more and more stark light, since all the hopes which the masses throughout the world had invested in a mythical Revolution supposedly capable of attacking the root of this evil and eventually suppressing it once and for all, these hopes have little by little been fading over the last decades. On the contrary it is nowadays a commonly accepted idea that a certain degree of inequality is necessary for the smooth functioning of society, in any case of the economy, since any strictly egalitarian policy would result in a race to the bottom, with demoralizing effects for the best and most enterprising individuals. Faced with this problem, without really daring to acknowledge it, governments now limit their ambitions to correcting somehow the most glaring inequalities.

However, for any eschatology resting on the principle that “one lives only once,” the fact of being born in a given place on the planet, in a given family and social milieu, is an element without particular significance, indeed sheerly arbitrary. The enormous inequality of opportunity at birth, which it seems beyond human means to remedy, necessarily then appears an enigma

and an outrage. Hence the temptation for a conscience tormented by this state of things -- and their number is most likely to multiply in the future -- to fall back on the old idea of transmigration, which makes of the mystery of evil a problem, for which it proposes a vaguely rational answer.

A CHANGING PARADIGM

Thus Transmigration, after having preceded Christianity and having under its rule remained as a parallel eschatology, in its shadow, may find itself today in the position of surviving it. Its perennial character is probably due to the simple, intuitive ways in which it imitates the cycles of nature: seasonal rhythms, migrations of birds, metamorphosis of insects, the regular alternation of generation and corruption. "The belief in metempsychosis" writes Schopenhauer "appears as man's natural conviction, as soon as, without pre-conceived idea, he begins somewhat to reflect."¹⁴ Indeed, we may be heading towards a new paradigm, or towards the renovation of a very old one, while a long historical parenthesis may be in the process of closing. Two or three centuries from now, perhaps, the idea of an infinite succession of rebirths will again have imposed itself as compellingly self-evident.

Does this mean that reincarnation will then have the status of a proven and thenceforth indisputable scientific truth? In no way. To imagine this would mean to apply the logical principle of the 'excluded middle' to a realm which by its very nature lies outside its rule. It is "obvious" to our understanding that existence is either unique or multiple, without a conceivable middle ground. Thus, either the hypothesis of transmigration will be true and that of the single nonrepeatable existence false, or the opposite. Now if this same understanding, taking into account a possible limitation of our ability to know in these matters, affirms that one hypothesis is only probable, and the other proportionately improbable, or even if it concludes that the question is undecidable and rejects equally both hypotheses, it nonetheless continues tacitly to postulate that 'in Reality itself,' in the 'Thing in itself,' as unrecognizable as that is for us, it is "necessarily" one or the other hypothesis which finds itself verified. But to reason like this is to forget that the screen of death is by definition opaque, and not circumventable in a provisional way by adequate means, like any other empirical obstacle, however formidable it might appear. This opacity is absolute, for if we could really, by appropriate means, cast a glance at the afterlife and in some way communicate with the dead, this would imply a real integration of the space-time beyond with our space-time here below, and thus a real dissolution of death.

Let us return for a moment to ancient India. It has always been known there that the idea of *samskāra* corresponds only to an exoteric or "popular" level of truth, and that behind it, another more esoteric truth was to be sought. This is the very meaning of the idea of Liberation as it is presented, for example, in Non-Dualistic Vedānta and Mahāyāna Buddhism. In Vedānta it is more particularly the paradigm of the dream which predominates: access to Liberation takes place in the course of the adept's "last" incarnation, just as in

a dream, especially a nightmare, waking up is induced by an ultimate dream episode of unbearably dramatic character. And just as in retrospect awakening disqualifies as pure illusions all of the dream episodes which came before, in the same way Liberation subverts the very logic of transmigration and expresses itself by an insight such as this: "No one has ever been, is, or will be in bondage to *saṃskāra*; all have been liberated from all eternity."¹⁵ The only reality acknowledged for transmigration is, when all is said and done, a psychological or ethical one. It is not a wandering from body to body throughout the external world, but rather the internal odyssey of the soul, in the grip of the illusion that it is different from others, and which unconsciously strives by projecting itself into all kinds of imaginary situations and roles, to expel its congenital ignorance in order to join the universal Self. What is there "after" Liberation? A history has unfolded, but it is not that of a character who would survive the completion of his story and could sum it up to himself. Still the texts -- Brahmanic and Buddhist -- evoke such a recapitulation, in the form of a "panoramic" reminiscence of previous lives supposedly taking place just before Awakening, but they understand it as the ultimate expression, half real, half unreal, the swan song of an apparent individual existence which is now returning to this immutable and pacified ground from which it appeared to have detached itself. One measures the abyss which separates these Indian conceptions from the contemporary neo-reincarnationism. On one side, a sort of flash which both illumines and consumes all of the previous pseudo-existences, a bridge thrown between time and eternity; on the other, a sort of fishing in the murky waters of the past which brings back haphazardly some previous lives, each more glamorous and glittering than the last.

Transmigration on the one hand, and the conception of life as unique and nonrepeatable on the other, are thus in no way theories concerning the Real, nor do they attempt to approach it through reasoning and experience, which would make them demonstrable or refutable by means of those very sources of knowledge. They are collective mental constructions which precede and frame our conception of time and therefore dismiss in advance any fact of experience likely to contradict them. Their "truth" is not measured by their degree of adequacy to a hypothetical hidden Reality of how things might be after death, but by their capacity for opening to individuals positive and meaningful prospects, both for their present earthly existence and for the future which they cannot help imagining, beyond it.¹⁶ They are "true" only inasmuch as they do perform this function, and they become "false," or rather inadequate, when they don't. Thus transmigration will play all the better its role of consoling belief to the extent that its mode of operation will be maintained in a darkness suitable to all individual emotional projections. On the contrary, when elevated in broad daylight as a dogma, a system for explaining and justifying everything, it immediately provokes a kind of outrage, both intellectual and moral. This could be seen quite recently in Germany, when certain reincarnationist "therapists" did not hesitate to assert that the victims of the Nazi concentration camps, more particularly the Jews, had simply settled in the gas chambers, each one for themselves, a heavy murderer's *karma*.¹⁷

Let us conclude that, in any case, transmigration will perhaps be able in the future to compel recognition only inasmuch as it will be able to become, or become once more, the natural horizon of our consciousness of time. As a pure intellectual construction, it is flimsy, even dangerous. Its only possible reality is that of a massive collective certitude, in short, of a myth. Searching for objective proofs of it is pointless, and so is the ambition of refuting it with the help of rational arguments.

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NOTES

1. One could become convinced of this, notably, by reading the masterly general survey which Helmuth Zander recently devoted to the subject: *Geschichte der Seelenwanderung in Europa, Alternative religiöse Traditionen von der Antike bis heute*, Primus Verlag, Darmstadt 1999.

2. Zander (op. cit., p.601) gives a chart summarizing the results of the most recent of these surveys for the main countries of Western and Eastern Europe as well as for the Americas. The average hovers around 25%, with peaks above 30% (Poland, Brazil). Also, in Quebec, where 80% of the population call themselves Catholic, a 1984 survey revealed that about 20% of those surveyed held some sort of belief in reincarnation.

3. This point however would need to be qualified, inasmuch as recent ethnographical surveys conducted notably in South India, highlight here and there, among the “untouchables” or the very low castes, a certain mocking scepticism towards such a belief. The origin and social function of this attitude remain for the moment not well determined.

4. See for example III, 35 - IX, 27 - 32 - XVIII, 45 - 49.

5. It is significant in this regard that already in Antiquity, and particularly within Neoplatonism, the possibility of animal rebirths was hotly disputed and generally rejected. See Zander, op. cit., pp.102-111.

6. The collective suicide committed in 1995 in Switzerland by members of the Knights of the Solar Temple sect fits in here. Zander also mentions the case (p.602) of the thirty-eight members of the American religious community *Heaven's Gate*, who “took advantage” of the appearance of the Hale-Bopp Comet in 1997 to end their lives, apparently persuaded that the comet would take them into the infinity of the cosmos.

7. Paco Rabane, *Trajectoire*, Paris, 1991, p.89.

8. See Ian Stevenson, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, University of Virginia Press, 1974.

9. These examples, taken above all from the francophone literature, naturally reflect a specific national imagination, but the same features are found, *mutatis mutandis*, in the anglophone, Germanic, etc. literatures. See for example H. Zander, *op cit*, pp.624-628.

10. Certain cases have been totally “demystified”, like that of Bridey Murphy, which was widely talked about in the United States in the seventies. See Ian Wilson, *Mind out of Time? Reincarnation Claims Investigated*, V. Gollancz, London, 1981.

11. Numerous examples in J. Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire*, Gallimard, Paris, 1983.

12. One recalls Fragment 117: “For in the past I was a young man and a young maiden and a shrub and a bird and a mute fish of the sea” (H. Diels/W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, zwölfte Auflage, Zürich-Dublin, 1966, v. I, p.358).

13. See H. Ide Lubac, *La posterite spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, Le Sycomore, Namur-Paris, 2 v. 1978-1981; also G. Gusdorf, *Du Neant à Dieu dans le savoir romantique*, Payot, Paris, 1983.

14. *Le monde comme volonté et représentation*, PUF, Paris, 1966, p.1255; also see pp.447-449.

15. Concerning the relevance of this same theme in Buddhism and Jainism, see W. Halbfass, *Karma und Wiedergeburt im indischen Denken*, Diederichs Kreuzlingen-München, 2000, p.70, 128, 225.

16. From a more particularly philosophic perspective, it is possible to maintain that the structure of human temporality is such that a double reference to a past and a future is a component of any experienced present. In the grip of this transcendental imagination the man or woman, having reached the threshold of death, necessarily continues, even if he or she claims to be an atheist, to project a future, even if he or she calls it “Nothingness.” Only the subversion of this radical imagination, i.e. the irruption of the eternal present of *nirvana*, would be able to dissipate the mirage of the beyond as “future life.”

17. Some of them were condemned in Frankfurt in 1996, at the close of a proceedings for libel filed by the Jewish community of Hesse. In the same way, the well-known American psychic Edgar Cayce maintained that “the sufferings inflicted on the Jews by the Nazis were but the karmic consequence of the cruelty which the Jewish people had shown towards other communities in the course of history” (according to Zander, *op. cit.*, p.198 and 583.)

Chapter XIII

Moral Values in the Multi-Cultural Context: An Indian Approach

R.C. Pradhan

This paper is an analysis of the moral situation in the multi-cultural context, especially of the moral values which seem to persist longer than many cultural practices. Multi-culturalism is a historical phenomenon which opens up the possibility of multiple cultures and social practices. This itself brings in multiple value systems that claim to co-exist without being a threat to one another. Now the problem is: if the multiple value systems are autonomous and self-enclosed, then there will be no scope for cross-cultural understanding on the moral values which mankind should pursue. However, without such cross-cultural understanding, there cannot be global understanding on what the future of mankind will be. This may lead to some kind of a moral impasse which will have a long term impact on the future of human civilization

My effort in this paper is to show that human values, that is, the values that matter most to mankind are universal and can be shared by a number of cultures. Cultures generally change but values remain, more or less, the same, especially the core-values. These core values constitute the bedrock on which the future of human civilization stands. The multi-cultural and multi-ethnic situation which we confront today can be squarely faced if we keep in mind that the basic moral values are everywhere the same, irrespective of our cultural and other related differences.

FROM CULTURAL PLURALISM TO CULTURAL UNITY

Cultural pluralism is a historical fact. There have been many cultures in the history of mankind, each with its own identity and deriving its sustenance from its own cultural heritage. The cultures of the civilized world are different from those of the barbarians. Cultures stand for ways of life, language, art and literature of the people concerned. In short, culture is the inner dynamics of the life of people. Since there are different ways of expressing the inner life of people, there are different cultures existing in the world.

The differences amongst the cultures, e.g., Western and non-Western, lies not so much in the different goals pursued as in the different ways we live and pursue these goals. The cultural differences are the differences in style, that is, in form rather than in content. Once we remove the differences at the surface, we can discover the unity among all cultures. This is demonstrated in the basic spiritual and moral aspirations which are common to all mankind. These aspirations constitute the bedrock of all cultures, though the ways in which these aspirations are expressed and fulfilled differ.

Cultures in the developed societies differ from those of the underdeveloped because of the high technological advancement. Thus there appears to be a gap between the highly advanced societies and those that are lagging behind, but there is no reason to believe that the people from these opposite cultures cannot share the same goals of life or be persuaded to pursue the same ideals of life.

Cultures are varied only in the surface because there is an undercurrent of unity which makes them belong to the same human family. That is, cultures share a family resemblance, to put it Wittgenstein's words¹, if not a Platonic unity. No two cultures are identical in the logical sense, but each can have so much resemblance with another that they share many features in common.

Universal Moral Values

The most fundamental feature which unites the different cultures is the pursuit of moral values. Almost all cultures have moral principles which people follow in their life. These principles may vary in detail from culture to culture but, more or less, all follow some moral principles or other. For example, in all human societies there is a definite moral sense which makes people distinguish between what is morally good and what is bad or evil. This we may call "the universal moral sense"² which is the source of all moral systems across the globe. In all developed cultures, for example, killing life for no reason or for pleasure is bad, while promoting life or showing compassion is good. Excepting a few sub-cultures, almost all cultures promote the life-giving virtues such as love, fellow feeling, compassion, non-killing and universal brotherhood. These virtues are the life-promoting virtues as distinguished from their opposites.

There are thus moral values which all rational human beings follow or are constrained to follow. The moral ideal of saintliness and renunciation is common to many cultures. This is expressed in the Christian ideal of sainthood, the Hindu ideal of a monk and the Buddhist ideal of the Enlightened. These moral ideals speak of the human urge to transcend the mundane life in search of a spiritually developed life. Such values of saintliness, renunciation and dedication to higher life are universal moral phenomena and need to be treated as transcendent to any particular culture.

Kant's universalistic ethics³ propounds a set of values such as obedience to moral law, duty without self-interest and the adoration for the holy. These values, according to him, know no cultural bounds and are available for all rational human beings. Kant's ideal of universal values is based on his idea of a universal moral will which needs to be emphasized in the present context. The moral will is not will of the ordinary kind, but is itself holy and autonomous, being free from the contingencies of the common individual will. All universal values have their source in this universal moral will.

The Indian system of Vedanta as propounded in the Upanishads calls for the transcendence of the life in the world for a higher life of spirit⁴. Ac-

According to this point of view, life in the world is afflicted by suffering and death and so there must be a way out of the life of suffering in a higher life of spiritual realization. This life of spiritual realization is a universal goal of life in the sense that this is true for all rational human beings. Like Kant, the Vedanta declares that all rational human beings must distinguish between the higher form of life and the life of sensuous pleasures. It is in the life of reason and knowledge (*jnana*) that man achieves liberation from the lower form of existence.

The Idea of Santana Dharma

Thus we can find out a set of values which may run across all cultures and social systems. Moral values exist in a space of eternity or timelessness in the sense that though particular forms of cultures have died, there are still values hovering over the dead cultures⁵. The long surviving values are those which can be called everlasting (*sanatana*).

The idea of a eternal values is typical of the Indian moral thinking which puts a premium on the eternity of moral values or what is called *dharma*⁶. *Dharma* stands for the universal moral law that operates in all ages and in all cultures. It is not relative to time and history. That is to say, it transcends time and history and thus remains beyond the particular cultural modes through which it is expressed.

There are two ways in which we can interpret the idea of eternal values: first, we may suppose that moral values are distinct entities which are imprinted in the minds of all human beings. These entities have no existence in space and time and are yet graspable by the human reason; secondly, we may construe the values as the cosmic principles which govern the moral universe. While Plato takes the eternal moral values in the first sense, Kant and the Indian moralists take them in the second way. In both ways, however, values are immortal and eternal. While Plato would like to argue that moral values are given to the rational minds as the forms of all good life, Kant and the Indian thinkers would like the moral laws to be binding on all moral agents and therefore they would take the moral universe as having an autonomous existence of its own.

The idea of eternal values suggests that the values are objective and are binding for all rational human beings. Human beings in general are so constituted that they can obey the moral laws as the latter have a cosmic existence of their own. The Vedic thinkers believe that the moral laws are the cosmic laws which hold the universe under one moral fabric. The moral law is called *rita*⁷ which is the principle of unifying all existence under one moral rule. The Indian moral thinkers have in general co-opted this basic moral law as the source of all moral values, including those pertaining to the human as well as the non-human world.

THE MORAL FABRIC OF THE UNIVERSE

The moral fabric of the universe is such that it sustains all existence and binds all forms of life under the impersonal governance of one Moral Ruler. This speaks of a highly systematic universe in which moral contingency is not allowed. Moral necessity rules supreme in this universe. That is why the Indian thinkers have accepted the Law of Karma⁸ which apportions the moral results according to the performance of actions. In this universe nothing is arbitrary and no action is without its moral worth. Thus the universe is founded on the necessary laws of morality.

To put it in other words, the moral law binds all human societies and individuals under the same scheme of justice, rights, and the common good. Thus there is the necessary foundation of our moral life in the basic concepts and rules which constitute the basic moral fabric⁹. It is because of the unifying moral fabric that we can think of universal moral values which are common to all men, irrespective of their political, geographical and ethnic affiliations. These values like justice, equality, fairness, human unity and brotherhood surpass all cultural differences. Therefore they could be called eternal values.

The demand for a universal moral fabric is not contingent upon the requirement of a well-ordered society or a society wedded to happiness. The law is operative in the universe by virtue of being a moral law without taking into considerations the contingent conditions like happiness and social order. It is not universally guaranteed that all men are happy or that the society is well ordered. Morality in no case ensures happiness. Therefore the universal moral fabric must be made independent of the prevailing conditions of the universe. The Indian systems of morality make morality cosmo-centric rather than man-centric. This is because morality is a necessary condition of the cosmic order rather than of the human and the social order.

Universality and Particularity in the Moral Order

The universal moral order, however, does not devalue the individual man or particular moral situation. It takes care of them in the proper context. To be universal is not to deny the particular. Neither in the West nor in India is morality viewed in abstraction. It is only in the context of a particular situation that a moral law operates. But the particular situation does not determine the law. The particular situation is shaped according to the law. For Plato, the Form of Good is reflected in a particular action. For Kant, the moral law has its application in the empirical world. But for that matter the law does not become an empirical law. Therefore the laws of morality are always kept universal to make them necessary across all moral situations.

Wherever morality is situation-dependent, it loses its moral credibility and becomes a set of conditional rules. Thereby it becomes at best a convention or custom in morality. Such customs are no better than rules of a particular society which have no universal validity. Moral thinkers therefore agree with R.M. Hare¹⁰ that moral rules are universalizable and are true of a

larger domain of human beings. This gives us hope that morality is not of a particular group or a culture, but it belongs to the whole humanity.

Sociologists and anthropologists are of the opinion that morality is a matter of social customs or cultural practices. According to them, what is called moral is derived from the life-worlds of the people concerned. Therefore they are of the opinion that there is nothing distinctly moral from what is observed as customary or cultural. This view is propounded by the social scientists who do not accept morality as a distinct category. Therefore they commit the Naturalistic Fallacy of deriving the moral from the cultural. This situation arises because of the reduction of the category of the moral rule to an empirical rule.

The moral relativists argue that there are no universal moral laws and that all laws of such kind are relative to some culture or other. For them, as morality is ultimately culture-bound, there is not reason to accept a set of universal moral values. Thus relativism directly confronts universalism or absolutism in moral theory. The argument is not between those who accept moral values and those who do not, but between those who take moral values as absolutely real and those who deny this. Those who deny the absolute reality of values are likely to argue that values have no existence apart from some culture or other. Relativists are not necessarily skeptical about values but are likely to view one moral system as being as good as another. Thus relativists see no reason why there should be value-conflicts at all because each value system is closed to the other.

MORAL CONFLICTS

Moral conflicts do arise, however, because of the differences among moral systems and the possibility of conflict in acceptance of values. No two value systems are the same because of difference of approach and emphasis. Since value systems emerge from the cultural and religious background, there is bound to be conflict around some values, especially those linked with religion. But this value conflict can be resolved at a higher level, that is, at a level, where moral values are commonly accepted. For example, two communities can differ as to whether women should be allowed freedom or not, but there is no conflict regarding the issue whether women should be killed for violating a social code. The value of non-killing is the higher value that brings many communities together.

Thus there is a hierarchy of values which allows for more and more universal values such that at the apex there are core values which accept no community barrier. These values flow into many cultures and cement the differences among them. Thus there is no space left for relativizing values at the apex of the moral super structure. The super structure unifies human values and therefore there is possibility of universal moral values even though diversity in human values is admitted.

Moral pluralism does not entail relativism precisely for the reason that to have diverse value systems does not mean to have values which are

significant only in a particular context. The values which are relative to cultures and societies are purely subjective and have no validity except in their specific contexts. Thus moral objectivity cannot go along with relativism for the reason that the latter denies any sort of objectivity to the values which are relative. J.L.Mackie¹¹ while defending moral relativism denies that there are objective values at all. In fact, he thinks that to suppose that there are objective moral values is an error and it must be due to the erroneous notion that moral judgments have objective truth in the Platonic sense. Therefore he refutes objectivism in moral theory as a case of misjudgment. According to him, the so-called value-conflicts are the results of positive conceptual errors.

IDEA OF HUMAN UNITY

The future of humanity depends on how we resolve our value conflicts at a higher valuational level. This is possible if we recognize higher values which are universally acceptable to all mankind. These higher values are such values as human unity in diversity, human welfare, freedom and justice. If we pursue these values we can arrive at a global human understanding. Sri Aurobindo¹² calls it the dawn of a new civilization -- the rise of a new humanity which can transcend the age-old cultural and political barriers.

Multi-culturalism can very well give rise to the global human unity in spite of the differences in race and culture. The differences are no barrier to unity in human ideals and values. Mankind can definitely rise to the level of the unity in mind and spirit if sufficient effort is made by the human community. For this what is needed is the understanding of the unity at the level of the human spirit which gives rise to the higher order human values.

To sum up: moral philosophy in the multi-cultural context must take a spiritual turn to rediscover the universal and eternal moral values. The deeper unity of mankind must be sought in what Kant calls Reason or what Sri Aurobindo calls the Spirit.

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NOTES

1. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1953), section 67.

2. Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics*, trans. T.K.Abbott (Orient Publications, Delhi, 1987; First Published, 1873).

3. *Ibid.*

4. Swami Vivekananda, *Selections from The Collected Works*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 2000. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980). *Dharma* literally means what holds things together. It is derived from the Sanskrit root “*dhr*” meaning “to hold”.

5. *rta* literally means that which is, that is, is real.

6. The Law Karma is common to Hindu and Buddhist moral thinking in which it is accepted as the law of human actions. It holds that every action has its cause as well as its effects. The law of Karma upholds a necessary causal order in the universe.

7. B.K. Motilal, "Pluralism, Relativism and Interaction between Cultures" in *Culture and Modernity*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Motilal Banarassidas, Delhi, 1994), pp.153-59.

8. R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1952).

9. J.L.Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Penguin, 1977).

10. Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle, The ideal of Human Unity and War and Self-Determination*, reprinted in *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, Volume 25 (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1997).

Chapter XIV

On 'Moral Right' and 'Morally Right': from Logical Right to Moral Right

Rajendra Prasad

There is no general agreement among philosophers about either the feature or features a thing, human or non-human, should have in order to be entitled to have a right, or to be right in a moral or even non-moral sense. But there is no disagreement about there being a good number of human beings who can be said to *have* this or that sort of right and about a good number of human things which can be said to *be* morally or non-morally right. In talking about rights, or right things, in this essay, I shall have in mind this class of human beings and things and the feature or features of theirs which entitles them to occupy this favoured position. I shall not discuss this in any comprehensive way, but shall refer to some of them which commonsense considers necessary or relevant, for someone's, or something's, having a right, or, being right.

I shall begin with a discussion of the notion of a logical right and of being logically right, and use this to pass on to the notion of a moral right and of being morally right.

If two persons, A and B, are participating seriously in a discussion on a rationally arguable subject and B asserts that P, A has the logical right to ask him to give his reason for asserting that P, howsoever clear or respectable B may be to A, or to the society to which one or both of them belong to. Of course, it is assumed here that the truth of P is not obvious to A. If it is, then, if A asks for a reason, he would be indulging in what a classical Indian logician would call *jalpa*, an art of disputation in which a disingenuous disputant tries not to ascertain the truth of something but to embarrass, or score a victory on, the person he is arguing with. In doing such a thing A would be misusing his logical right. B would then have the logical right to ask him why he is asking him to give a reason for asserting that P when P is an obvious truth. In that case, if A refuses to give his reason for doing that, or has no reason to offer, he would be forfeiting his logical right to ask B to supply a reason for asserting that P. All this shows that an individual may not only have a logical right, but he may also misuse it and lose it. He may also acquire a right if he fulfills a set of conditions. For example, if he does not have a good understanding of Dharmakirti's theory of inference he has no logical right to question its completeness, but he will acquire this right after equipping himself with a knowledgeable understanding of the theory.

It is clear here that if A is, in matters of logic, obtuse or insensitive, he would not, or may not, feel the logical need of asking B to give a reason for asserting that P even if the truth or relevance of P is not obvious to him. This would not mean that A does not have the logical right to ask for a reason; it only means that he is not aware of his right and therefore is not in a position to

exercise it. It should not look odd to say that he has the right but is not aware of it. He has it in principle, in a timeless, impersonal, sense, in which any participant in a rationally assessable transaction has it. To be aware of his right he needs to have a certain amount of logical maturity which includes logical or conceptual sensitivity.

An individual's logical sensitivity produces in him a feeling of discomfort when he detects a logical oddity and a feeling of joy when he notices a logical nicety or refinement. All this happens because there exists in the conduct of a communicative language game a set of norms, standards, or expectations. That is why when an individual does not realize that he has the right to ask for a reason for someone's asserting that P, or the asserter does not grant the legitimacy of the former's right to do that, we think they do not play the game as it ought to be played or is normally played, that they are not competent to play the game or that the engagement they have been having is one in which giving or asking for reasons have no place. But suppose an addressee does not respond to the assertion that P by saying that it is false though he is convinced that it is, and that he has the logical right to say that it is false. He does not, because he thinks that by calling the assertion false, or even questionable, he would make the asserter feel hurt or injured, and that hurting or injuring anybody's any feeling is morally wrong. This, in fact, is the idea behind the Jaina, a classical Indian philosophical, theory of conditional predication (*syadvāda*). The theory maintains that whenever we make any predication, any assertion to the effect that something is true or false, we should not make a blank assertion that it is true, or false, but prefix 'Perhaps' to it. Going back to the earlier example, A should say to B that perhaps his assertion "that P" is false; nay, even B should have said that perhaps it is the case that p, instead of making the blank statement "that P". This doctrine of the Jainas is an implication of their moral doctrine of non-injury or non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), the doctrine that no injury be ever done to any creature. This doctrine is based on the view that it is a moral right of every creature that it be not injured by anyone and that, consequently, anyone who does any injury to anyone would be violating this moral right and therefore be doing something morally wrong.

We have met now with a case of moral right overriding a logical right. Most of the general things which have been said of a logical right are true of a moral right as well. For example, to be aware of any moral right of his or of anyone else an individual must have a certain amount of moral maturity, including moral sensitivity; he must be able to feel moral discomfort or even moral anger, at the sight of a moral wrongdoing, and to feel a kind of noble joy, or even dignified pride, at the sight of an act of morality involving some personal sacrifice on the part of its doer, etc. Further, as in the case of a logical right, the concept of a moral right, too, works the way it does because of the way the moral language game is played among the members of a moral community in their social transactions, with the possibility that the moral community, at least in some cases, may encompass all rational human beings. That it sometimes does is clear from the fact that a glaring moral wrongdo-

ing committed by a member of one cultural community, arouses moral anger, or at least a strong sense of moral disapproval, in any morally mature individual irrespective of his own indigenous, cultural, affiliations and preferences. A clear example of such a case is, as depicted in the *Mahābharata*, Dussasana's attempt to derobe Draupadi in a full session of his father's, king Dhritarashtra's, court and the silence of the learned nobles assembled there when the helpless woman appeals to them to condemn and stop this act of immorality. One does not have to belong to a Hindu community to feel moral anger at such an occurrence. Only one man, Vidura, in that court, raises his voice against the derobing and requests the king to have it stopped. He does that at great personal risk because he is the least powerful individual among the members present there, surviving on the king's largesse, because of being a slave woman's son (*dasiputra*). Still the sense of justice and uprightness he exhibits arouses a feeling of moral admiration in any individual, no matter to which cultural or ethnic group he belongs.

To live sensibly is to live as a member of a society; to live as a member of society is to indulge in at least some social transactions. For doing the latter we need the use of a public language which makes inter-personal communication possible. We also need to perform a certain type of actions essential for making possible social and societal participation which includes both cooperation and conflict among participating individuals and groups. The use of public language requires that we generally observe a set of logical norms or rules, and the performance of social actions requires that we observe a set of moral norms or rules. That is how such notions as those of a logical right and logically right move, as well as those of a moral right and a morally right move have to be present in our social life. They have to be there as constitutive of our life and not merely as some dispensable items of decoration. What I want to underline is that logic and ethics are constitutive of viable social living. To live well we need to observe some logical, as well as some moral, norms or rules. Sometimes, for example, when a right is denied, it becomes hard to decide whether a logical, or a moral, right has been denied. For example, when a philosopher of one orientation is denied the right to comment on a work of another orientation, one may say that he has been denied his logical right, i.e., his right as a philosopher, to comment on my philosophical work whatsoever, or equally accurately, that he has been denied his moral right to express freely his philosophical views.

To say that something is logically right, to put it roughly, is to say that there is available a conclusive or convincing reason for doing it or affirming it, and that, therefore, not doing it, or not affirming it, or doing or affirming something contrary, is self-inconsistent or conceptually bad. In the use of notions like those of 'reason,' 'justified', 'self-consistent' (or 'self-inconsistent'), 'conceptually bad' etc., there is an implicit assumption. This is that they are impersonal notions in the sense that any two persons who are rational, understand the context of their dialogue, and do not consider unquestionable a belief which is logically indefensible but has a built in capability to block

agreement or further discussion, etc., would be able to agree about their applicability to any case by using their logical resources.

For example, suppose, B asserts that P. A finds it untenable on good, objective, grounds, and asks B to supply his reason for the assertion. B has no reason to rebut A's counter-reasons. But he still holds to it on the ground that it has been made by a revered person (or is a component of a revered tradition). What happens here is that B has a closed mind about a particular criterion of logical rightness. In such situations resolution of disagreement in a logical manner becomes impossible because, on account of one participant's rigid attitude towards a criterion of the tenability of an assertion (or belief), the disagreement between the two participants has become a disagreement in attitude, i.e., a non-rational disagreement.

Obviously, nobody can have the logical right to do a thing which is logically not right, simply because nobody can have a right, logical, or moral, to do anything which is not right, logically or morally.

But it is more difficult to show that something is morally not right than it is to show that something is logically not right. We, for example, show the latter by bringing out the self-inconsistency involved in it, if there is any. On the other hand, to show the former is not so simple because, on account of the complexity of social living, of which moral living is a component, there is no one criterion of moral rightness. There are internal differences even among deontologists, teleologists, and virtue-ethicists about what is, or what is not, a right-making property. But whatever criterion or criteria of moral rightness an individual accepts, it is obvious that he cannot have a moral right to do what he himself considers morally not right.

But is one entitled to have the moral right to do anything which is morally right to do? It seems to me that, in a good number of cases, he is not, for the simple reason that a moral right generally, if not always, accrues to a person from the role he has to play, or the position he occupies, in the social context in which the morally right thing is to be done. For example, it is morally right to ask a young man, even using some harsh words, to stop ill-treating his newly married loyal wife because of some of her rural habits. But everybody does not have the moral right to do that. But the youngman's, or the girl's parents have that right because of their role or position in the social matrix consisting of the two families. Even this, some would say, would be possible if the young man and social matrix have respect for some sort of traditional Indian social ethics. If the young man, his wife, or his social matrix think that how he behaves with his wife and she with him are matters pertaining to their private conjugal life, anyone of them may say that parents have no right to interfere in their private affairs. This would mean a conception of the role of parents in the lives of their children and children-in-law different from the conception of the role required to give the parents the required moral right.

Moral rights, which are role-dependent, may change, or even cease to be rights, if the right-generating roles are changed. A newly born baby, in every society, has the moral right to be brought up by its parents. But suppose

a state intends to increase its population and therefore, enacts a legislation to be effect that it is the duty of the state to take care of children from the day of their birth till they become adult and are able to maintain themselves. Children would then have their rights intact, but the onus of fulfilling them will pass on to the state. Since some rights and duties go together, a state can not only take over the responsibility or duty of bringing up children but also can empower itself with the right to do that. In that case the parents' right to bring up or groom their children according to their preferences, would be taken away--or if not completely taken away, it would surely be very greatly reduced or watered down. But such things cannot be done, or cannot justifiably be done, with what may be called a basic moral right, for example, an individual's right that the dignity of his personhood or individuality never be injured, or, to put it in a slightly different way, that his right to protest against anybody's, even his state's, attempt to offend his dignity as a person never be denied to him. A society which denies this dignity to any class of its members would, according to many, stand very low on a moral scale for rating the moral status of societies. The same would be the case with an individual who considers any individual, even himself, devoid of this a dignity.

To deny a man his logical right to think freely and in a manner his well-cultivated logical sense is, in effect, to infringe his basic moral right, his dignity as a mature rational person. That is why its denial is hurtful and the logical anger it arouses is, in spirit, a form of moral anger. It is why also in an inter-personal rational participatory, context observance of this logical right of every participating member assumes the status of a basic moral right.

I maintained earlier that right is generally role-generated. What I have said above may seem to suggest that the basic right that one's dignity as a person, or as a logically responsive being, be not infringed, is not role-generated. This does not go against the main thrust of the essay. Moreover, even this right can be said to be role-generated because to act or able to act as a person, as a morally mature-sensitive individual, is itself to perform or be able to perform the role of a moral (or rational) agent. A moral agent is not only he who does or is capable of doing something moral, but also who can judge something done or doable as moral or immoral. To play this role is, in effect, to play a multiplicity of roles, for example, the role of a friend, an enemy, a neighbour, citizen, an expatriate, a professional, a brother or sister, a son or daughter, a parent, husband or wife, and employer or employee, etc.

An individual's ability to perform this role, or amalgam of roles, his personhood, may be suspended sometimes as a result of the circumstances, sometimes as a result of his own decision. In the Draupadi episode referred to earlier, her five husbands had temporarily lost their personhood, their agency, because of the circumstances, though they had been placed in those circumstances because of the initial decision of the eldest of them to join the game of dice, which he lost because of being cheated by the partner with whom he played the game. Therefore, though his joining the game was an act of his free will, the rest which followed thereupon may be attributed to the circumstances, or to his and his family's bad moral luck. But the nobles present

including the presiding king, who did not raise their voice against the attempt to derobe the wailing young lady, can only be said to have willfully suspended their moral agency for whatever reason. They, however, still were role-playing agents. Willful suspension of agency is an intentional action; therefore in, or by, doing so they continued to be role-players, moral or rather immoral agents. Therefore, they still had the moral right to try to stop the derobing.

Moral right and moral power to do something, or to get something done, need not go together. But whenever or wherever one or both of them exist, this is because their owner is an actual or at least a potential role-performing agent. The same or similar things can be said of logical right, which too may always not be accompanied with the power to exercise it.

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Chapter XV

Good as a Category of Indian Philosophy

Vladimir K. Schokhin

For more than two centuries now, historians of Indian philosophy have been trying to introduce it into scholarly circulation within a framework of European philosophical categories. These attempts are not only inevitable (since Indologists, both Western and Indian, in contrast to Pandits, are the bearers of European philosophical culture), but also fruitful, for specific features of any philosophical tradition may be revealed, by definition, only in a generic context, otherwise it would be impossible to delineate them, to say nothing about their interpreting. The only problem is to what extent general philosophical categories selected for formatting the non-European philosophical material do actually find real counterparts in the latter, or, to put the same differently, to what extent popular non-European notions reveal generic characteristics of this or that category of Western philosophy which is regarded as a pattern for their interpretation.

VALUES

It is for the last sixty years at least that Indologists have preferred to generalize the foundations of Indian practical philosophy through ‘values’, ‘systems of values’, ‘the hierarchy of values’, and other axiological concepts. This approach is partly justifiable. First, the English term ‘values’ in modern philosophical culture is unquestionably respectable and, therefore, for all those concerned with Indian practical philosophy it is most helpful to employ this term. Second, it also gets increasingly ‘devalued’, since it has been long passing from the rank of philosophical terms in the strict sense of the word to that of ‘weighty’ utterances used in ordinary speech; therefore, today hardly anyone would venture to define the range of its applicability. For these reasons, even the most notable Indologists apply it to the Indian material without bothering to justify such usage.

For example, Karl H. Potter, the foremost American historian of Indian philosophy, in his fundamental article devoted to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika (in the famous multi-volumed Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, one of the most remarkable series in the whole history of Indology) in the section entitled “Theory of Values”, promises to the reader that, after a short resume of general Hindu concepts, he will “turn to consider particular Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories about the nature of liberation and the other characteristic topics in the Hindu theory of values, such as karma and transmigration, the abilities of yogis and sages, the question of human versus divine freedom, and the relative worth of the various paths to liberation.”¹

To treat all the above as values, it is enough to know that values generally embrace all most important things, and to consider values in such a manner is to treat them as almost every non-philosopher does, yet Indian philosophy is not a matter of study only for the non-philosopher. But a philosopher, whereas scanning all enumerated above will compare it with what he/she knows about 'value' as a philosophical term that can be traced back (highlighting only the most important milestones) to the Platonic and Stoic *ἀξία* emerging at an intersection of the economic 'value' and the ethically 'preferable'; to the Kantian differentiation between 'trading value', 'affective value', and 'self-value' of each unique individual; or to Hermann Lotze's ontological distinction of 'existent' and 'significant' realities (*Geltungen*). Further, if our he/she philosopher turns to some some elaborations of axiological matters after Franz Brentano and Max Scheller, who contributed more than all their predecessors (with exception only, may be, Friedrich Beneke) into discovery of the inner world of an individual as a 'unique subjective being', he/she would identify the world of values as a kingdom of an individual's most profound 'significances' which includes the unity of its ambitions (an aspect of the future), a specific personal experience of ownership (an aspect of the present), and the keeping of 'cherished experience' deep in one's heart (an aspect of the past). Nothing in what Karl Potter mentions has anything to do with what has been just listed. Both Potter and his numerous predecessors and contemporaries are closer to the target when they discusses as 'values' the components of the well-known Hindu scheme of the four ends of man (*purushārtha*), i.e. profit (*artha*), erotic pleasure (*kāma*), religious virtue (*dharma*), and freedom (*moksha*). However, these essential qualities can be regarded as values only by one who fails to differentiate between 'values' (the adequate Hindu term for it is missing) and 'goals' (the key Hindu term for it being *artha*). Outwardly these indeed look similar, but differ essentially as quite different dimensions of the intentional world.² The foregoing is not supposed to underrate the philosophical status of Potter,³ as well as of P. N. Rao,⁴ T.M.P. Mahadevan,⁵ M. Hiriyanna,⁶ Shanti Nath Gupta⁷ (let alone many others) who used to write long before Potter about the system and hierarchy of values in traditional Indian philosophy. The reason for their 'inreading' axiology in the heritage of Hindu thought was due, in the second place, to 'apologetic' objectives (to present even the ancient Indian philosophy as being virtually no different from modern Western philosophies). But the prime reason lies just in the hermeneutic error I was talking about, that is in the assumption that any units of the modern European philosophical language may be used for describing the traditional Hindu thought without subjecting this procedure to any critical analysis.

All the said does not mean that I exclude any affinities between any aspects of what was regarded 'valuable' in Western philosophy and some expressions of some later Indian philosophers, having to do with intuitions of what is being discussed here. To give only one example, one may recall Abhinavagupta (from the 10th to 11th centuries A.D.), a great Kashmirian philosopher and theorist of aesthetics, who wrote about unutterable feelings

‘connected with the bliss of one’s own consciousness and ‘tender’ because of being ‘dyed’ by previous love-impressions or other feelings’ (Locanā I.4). I emphasize only that the very idea or ‘values’ was not developed by Indian philosophical tradition (this fact is acknowledged even by some champions of ‘Hindu axiology’, e.g. Shanti Nath Gupta – see footnote 7) and that fundamentals of Indian practical philosophy (the *purushārtha* scheme being one of the most important among them) were not axiological in the proper sense.

THE GOOD

In contrast to ‘values’, the concept of ‘good’ was a real constituent of the Indian spiritual culture, but it has not so far driven appropriate scholarly attention. Out of its numerous equivalents, let us single out two words, which are most significant for Hindu religious and philosophical texts. The first one is *śreyas* (in grammatical terms, it represents the comparative degree of the word ‘good’, i.e., ‘better’). In the *Katha-Upanishad*, Yama, the Vedic god presiding over the underworld, approves of Nachiketas, a young wise Brahmana, striving for the truth, with the well-known maxims according to which “Both the good (*śreyas*) and the pleasant (*preyas*) with different goals handcuff a human being. The one who appropriates the good will go straight (*sādhu*) while the one who chooses the pleasant will be worthless. Both, the good and the pleasant come to everyone, and a wise man can differentiate between them under close scrutiny. The wise will prefer the good, whereas the fool will choose the pleasant, being tempted by acquisition and possession [of pleasures]” (II. 1-2). The word *śreyas*, along with its superlative *niśreyasa* (meaning ‘the best in the world’), used in the dispute of gods for reckoning their ‘superiority’ (Kaushītaki-Upanishad II. 14), has not become a philosophical term as yet, but it will be used as such a millennium later in the Brahmanic tradition, whereas its Buddhist lexical correlate (*seyya* in the Pali canonical texts) will never leave the boundaries of ordinary speech.⁸ The other word, *kuśala*, was destined to have a completely different lot. In the same *Katha-Upanishad*, it means the capacity for comprehending supreme knowledge (II.7), in the more ancient *Chāndogya-Upanishad* it implies skill in ritual chanting *udgītha* (I.1.8),⁹ but it came to be stuck in the meaning of this skill in all subsequent Brahmanic treatises,¹⁰ whereas in the Buddhist literature its meaning appears to be quite significant in many regards.

In the Pali canonical texts, *kuśala* also means skill, but concurrently it acts as a full-fledged representative of the ‘good’ in several meaningful contexts. First of all, it is any righteous act as opposed to any wrongdoing.¹¹ Then, all the good qualities that constitute right and proper behavior are generalized as *kuśaladhammā* (Sutta-nipāta, vs. 1039, 1078). Lastly, the Buddhist texts reveal a formula of ten righteous actions (*dasakuśalakammā*) which extends over the entire schedule of classical Buddhism as a practical religion. These ten include: generosity, the observance of moral principles (*sīla*), meditation, respect for the ‘superior’, consideration for their needs, a transfer of one’s ‘merit’ to another, happiness felt for its recipient, preaching the Buddhist

teaching, listening to this preaching, and the adherence to right views. The other Pali texts leave no doubt that the listed 10 righteous actions are directly correlated with the system of ten 'ethical components' (*dasasīla*). The three 'roots of the good' are opposed to the three 'roots of the wrong', i.e. greed, hatred, and 'blindness' (Majjhima-Nikāya I.47, 489 = Aṅguttara-Nikāya I.203, etc.). Symmetrically, all the wrongdoings are generalized by the term *akusala* (Dīgha-Nikāya I.37, 163, etc.). For example, in the *Saṅgīti-sutta*, ten righteous actions (here we have a different list of them) are contrasted with ten wrongdoings (*dasa akusala kammaṭṭhā*) beginning with the violation of the *ahimsā* precept and ending with the cultivation of wrong views (Dīgha-Nikāya III.269).

The foregoing should be enough (though not all relevant passages were cited) to show that *kusala* is a stable term rather than just a popular lexical unit. It can be treated as the key equivalent to 'the good' in classical Buddhism, generalizing the essential concepts of 'moral behavior', 'merit' and its transfer, and even the essential components of Buddhist spiritual practices on the whole (up to the preaching of Buddhism and its reception).

Moreover, the Buddhist texts provide convincing evidence that the Buddhists' interest (if this word is appropriate to use here) in 'the good' was prepared by the first Indian non-Buddhist philosophers, who lived at the time of Buddha (the fifth century B.C. in Heinz Bechert's chronology) or, to be more precise, during the Shramana period of the Indian civilization.

For example, one of the passages in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* presents positions of those 'sceptics' (*amarāvikkhepikā*, meaning literally 'eel-wrigglers'), who refused to define anything as good or evil. "Let us assume that a certain Shramana or Brahmana among monks forms no true judgment as to what is good (*kusala*) and what is bad (*akusala*). And he starts to reason in the following way: 'I have no positive opinion on what exactly is good or wrong. And should I allege that this is really good and that is bad, then upon interpreting something as good and another as bad I may develop affection and passion or vice versa aversion and hatred for certain things. And if I experience any of such feelings, my judgment would be false. In this case, I may feel dissatisfied, and such misgivings would hinder my progress'. Thus being scared to pronounce a false judgment and feeling antipathy to it, he abstains from interpreting something as good or bad, and to the question asked gives an evasive answer like an eel-wiggler: 'This is not my judgment. I don't say that this is true, neither I allege the reverse.'" This approach is quite close to that of Greek sceptics who also refused to render judgments for 'ethical' reasons, adhering to the abstention from judgments for the sake of self-perfection. In the second position, these philosophers reproduce virtually the same arguments with the slight difference that the accent is placed here on an 'eel-wiggler's' reluctance to be 'affected' as a result of giving a categorical answer to the same questions.

But the compiler of the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, while writing about other 'eel-wrigglers', provides also another, third, motive of their reluctance to define good and evil: "I have no true judgment as to what is good and what is

bad. And should I allege that this is good and that is bad, some Shramanas and Brahmanas, those educated, shrewd, adept, and hair-splitting debaters, who wander around carping at groundless judgments with their wisdom, will put me under cross-examination, ‘interrogating’ me about my arguments. When they have done it all to me, I won’t be able to give them a satisfactory answer. And if I fail to provide a satisfactory answer, this will make me feel dissatisfied and hinder my ‘progress’.”¹²

The difficulties faced by the third ‘eel-wiggler’ most expressively reveal the scope of professional philosophical debates about the concepts of good in Indian philosophy in the 5th century B.C. The Pali canonical texts and commentaries thereon furnish ample evidence attesting to a high level of dialectical mastership in the Shramana period. These texts provide information even about professional Lokāyata disputers (at that stage, this term implied debaters, rather than materialist philosophers) practising in proving and refuting any *A* and non-*A* thesis, about Queen Kosala Mallikā, who had erected a special hall for polemics (*tindukhānuparibbājakārāma*) where any groups of wandering philosophers could conduct their debates, about a whole class of pilgrims (*paribbājaka*) who discussed with one another and any ‘guest’ during the monsoon season and about professional teachers of public disputation. The latter used to take fees from the young nobility for their tuition (just like their contemporaries, the ancient Sophists in Athens). Also mentioned were the whole clans of polemicists (including women) wandering throughout the Northern India with ready dialectical theses and determined to outsmart any ‘Shramana or Brahmana’ who ventured to take their challenge.¹³ However, the very occurrence of specialists in ‘the good’ prevailing among the ‘eel-wrigglers’ (out of their four positions, only the last one concerns the abstention from judgments on ‘metaphysical’ matters, from the existence of the other-world up to the existence of the ‘perfect’ one, i.e. *tathāgata*, after his corporeal death) indicates that the problem of defining ‘the good’ or the possibility of predicating the attribute ‘good’ (or ‘bad’, respectively) to any object *X* was one of the top priority for Buddha’s contemporaries. The actual desistence from answers to the question about the nature of good and bad with depicted motives attests to the fact that more than enough such answers had accumulated in India by that time. Finally, the association of the abstinence from giving direct answers to questions in the first two groups of ‘eel-wrigglers’ with the presumed risk of a ‘barrier’ (*antarāya*) to their spiritual self-perfection allows us to put forward a hypothesis that those who were less distrustful believed that a clear idea of good and bad should be the basic principle of the right spiritual life.

Nevertheless, the quoted passages from the *Brahmajāla-sutta* provide no answer to one important question, namely: what were exactly explanations of the nature of good and right, disagreeable to the ‘eel-wrigglers’ but advocated by those who claimed to be called ‘educated, shrewd, skilful, and hair-splitting debaters’? At least, a partial answer to this question can be found in one passage from another collection of the Pali suttas. The wanderer Uggahamāna Samanamandikāputta, while sitting with other pilgrims in the

polemic ‘hall of Queen Mallikā’ (mentioned above) offered to the Buddhist layman, carpenter Pañchakaṅga, to discuss who ought to be regarded as the one who ‘has realized all the good’ (*sampannakusala*). In his opinion, a person who deserves to be so called harms nobody either bodily or verbally, in his way of life, or even in his intentions. Buddha subjected this ‘definition’ to devastating criticism, pointing out that in this case a newborn infant should be also regarded as the one who ‘has realized all the good’ (Majjhima-Nikāya II. 22-29). Certainly, Buddha’s sarcasm hit the mark, but another point is of more importance for us, i.e., that one of the Shramana philosophers’ groups, engaged in the study of ‘the good’, identified it only as systemic rejection of negative life manifestations. Judging by the reasonings of the mentioned ‘eel-wrigglers’, the ‘negativists’ should have been opposed by those who tried to define ‘good’ in more positive terms. No doubt, their views gave rise to heated debates during which the ‘negativists’ could object that the ‘positive’ definitions of good were narrow, while their opponents could argue that the ‘negativists’ defined the good through the bad, revolving in such a manner within a logical circle. At any rate, both sides were most likely to agree on two points: some definition of the good are possible and essential for the justification of spiritual practices.

While looking at the subjects of debates of all epochs of Indian philosophy which followed the Shramana period, one cannot but acknowledge that the category of good proved to have a disproportionately modest ‘career’ in classical Indian philosophy as compared with its dynamic outset in the times of Buddha.

The *Nyāya-sūtras* (from the third to fourth century A.D.) begin with a declaration, typical of Hindu śāstras, according to which a proper study of their specific material -- in the given case, of 16 dialectical categories, ranging from the sources of knowledge (*pramāna*) to the reasons for being defeated in a dispute (*nigrahasthāna*) -- secure for the student the attainment of the supreme result defined as *nihśreyasa*, already familiar to us as ‘the best in the world’, which in this case could be prima facie identified as positive summum bonum (I.1.1.). However, the context of the following śātra leaves no doubt that the ‘supreme good’ is treated by the Nyāya school as identical with ‘complete salvation’ (*apavarga*) from suffering preordained by *samsāra* (I.1.2.). Praśastapāda, the author of the *Padārthadharmasamgraha*, in the preamble to this famous compendium on the Vaiśeshika philosophy (the sixth century A.D.), also asserts (obviously, challenging the compiler of the *Nyāya-sūtras*) that the same ‘supreme good’ is in store for one who has truly comprehended the six ontological categories of Vaiśeshika, from substance (*dravya*) up to inherence (*samavāya*), their similarities and differences,. The subsequent commentator of the *Nyāya-sūtras*, Uddyotakara, begins his preamble to his *Nyāya-vārttika* (the seventh century A.D.) by stating that any science (*śāstra*) is eventually designed for the good of humanity (*śreyas*), which is inaccessible to empirical cognition, but then he tries to convince the reader that the ‘supreme good’ also falls into two types, that is the visible supreme good (i.e., ‘non-supreme’) as attained at each true judgment, and the invisible (i.e.,

the ‘super supreme good’) which is achieved only upon the true cognition of 16 Nyāya categories and secures liberation from suffering in the world of *samsāra*. This opening statement of Uddyotakara’s preamble is reproduced by his commentator Vācaspati Miśra in the *Nyāyavārttikatātparyatikā* (circa the ninth century A.D.), again in the preamble to his text. Finally, Bhāsarvajña, the reformer of Nyāya, reproduces the same idea in the *Nyāyasāra* (from the ninth to tenth century A.D.) with some specifications: the supreme good can be attained by true knowledge of not all 16 categories, but only the objects of cognition (*prameya*), which are divided into what one should be rid of (the future suffering), the causes of getting suffering obtained (ignorance, desire, success, and causes of pleasure and suffering), what should be attained (salvation from suffering), and a means for this attainment (the true knowledge of *Ātman*).

The concept under present analysis is more substantially, albeit laconically, assessed in Śamkara’s celebrated *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (from the seventh to eighth century A.D.). Collating the promises made by the Mīmāṃsā teachers to their followers (perception of dharma) with those endorsed by the Vedāntists (perception of Brahman), this prominent Hindu philosopher specifies : “The perception of dharma results in success (*abhyudaya*) depending on the means used. The perception of Brahman leads to the supreme good (*nihśreyasa*), regardless of the means used.” Another difference between two schools lies in the fact that dharma refers to the future (resulting from ritual acts), whereas Brahman is omnipresent and omnipotent (I.1.1.).¹⁴ It follows that the supreme good cannot be ‘worked out’ by any means, but there is something that the ‘seeker’ can discover in oneself upon communion with it.

In the majority of cases, the ‘supreme good’ is used in the texts of classical darśanas only as an epithet of *moksha*. Therefore, being only an epithet, it could not be treated as an ultimate principle of spiritual practices similar to liberation which was regarded as an absolute and, what was of much importance, in the first place ‘negative’ ultimate goal in the classical Hindu darśanas.

As a result, good as a category of Indian philosophy has undergone a considerable degeneration in terms of its significance. This conclusion once again corroborates the hypothesis that the Shramana and classical Indian philosophies represent two, to a certain measure, different philosophical worlds allied in the continuity of philosophical mentality, but polar in their directions relating the essential foundations of practical philosophy.¹⁵

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NOTES

1. Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies. Vol.II. Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika up to Gaṅgeśa. Ed. by Karl H. Potter. Delhi, 1995, p. 18.

2. On the logical fallacy of interpreting *purushārtha* as values, see my article: Schokhin V. *Sāmkhya* on the Ends of Man (*purushārtha*). In: Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik. Reinbek, 1997, Bd. 21, S. 204-205. Indeed, one may do his/her best in order to do his/her duty before his/her chef or cope with some task important for his/her carrier but feel, nevertheless, repelled by that. On the other hand, most of our acknowledged goals are, in opposition to what is innerly valuable for us (in Beneke's terms, 'the inner spaces of individuals' blisses'), quite common with those of other people.

3. The essential components delineated by Potter in the "Hindu theory of values" comprise four 'human goals', *karma*, *samsāra* and redemption from them, as well as yoga and ways to salvation (*mārga*). In: Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies. Vol.II., pp. 24-27. In the volume devoted to Advaita-Vedānta, Potter adds to the Vedāntic 'theory of values' enslavement in *samsāra* (including all of its stages: death, the 'ascent' of the subtle body, heaven and hell, 'descent' to earth, rebirth, life), redemption from it (*moksha*), the role of action in *moksha*, and the four stages of life (*āśrama*). See: Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies. Vol. III. Advaita Vedānta up to *Śamkara* and His Pupils. Ed. by Karl H. Potter. Delhi, 1998, pp. 22-45.

4. Rao P. Nagaraja. *The Four Values of Indian Philosophy*. Mysore, 1940; Rao P. Nagaraja. The four values in Hindu thought. In: Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society. Bangalore, 1941, Vol. 32, 192-197.

5. See, e.g.: Mahadevan T.M.P. The basis of social, ethical, and spiritual values in Indian Philosophy. In: Essays in East-West Philosophy. Ed. by Ch.A. Moore. Honolulu, 1951, pp. 317-335; Mahadevan T.M.P. Social, ethical, spiritual values in Indian philosophy. In: The Indian Mind. ed. by Ch.A. Moore. Honolulu, 1967, pp. 152-171.

6. See, for example: Hiriyanna M. *The Quest after Perfection*. Mysore, 1952, pp. 89-93.

7. See: Gupta Shanti Nath. *The Indian Conception of Values*. Manohar, 1978.

8. Cf. "this is better for me than that" – Dīgha-Nikāya I.184, cf. "this would be better for them than that" – II.330, and the like.

9. In IV.10.2, the same word *kuśalam* means just 'well'.

10. See: Tedesco P. Sanskrit *kuśala* – 'skilful, welfare'. In: Journal of American Oriental Society, 1954. Vol. 74, pp. 131-142.

11. Thus, "he who 'makes up' for the wrongdoing (*papam kammam*) with a good action (*kusalena*) allows the world to glow" - Majjhima-Nikāya II.104 = Theragāthā I.872 = Dhammapāda vs. 173.

12. Pali Text Society. The Dīgha Nikāya. Ed. by Prof. T.W.Rhys Davids and Prof. J.E. Carpenter. Vol. I. London, 1967, pp. 24-26.

13. For details, see: Schokhin V.K. *India's First Philosophers*. Moscow, 1997, pp. 51-57, 150, 195-197 (in Russian).

14. The *Brahmasūtrashānkarabhāshyam* with the commentaries of Ratnaprabhā, Bhāmatī and Nyāyanirmaya of Shrīgovindānanda, Vāchaspati and Ānandagiri. Ed. by R. Sh. Dhupakar, M.Sh. Bakre. Bombay, 1904, P. 34-36.

15. For that matter, it is possible to view the position of India's first philosophers as far more 'European'. It is enough to recall that the treatment of good as the foundation of ethics (science of virtues), which can be clearly discerned in their approach to ethical problems (see the above), was laid down in the first section of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Chapter XVI

The Difficult Task of Hitting the Mean: Aristotle's Mean (Mesotes) and Buddha's Middle Path (Majjhimā Paṭipadā)

Victoria Lysenko

If we want to compare Aristotle's doctrine with that of Buddhism, it would be more natural to consider, on the Buddhist side, such systematic thinkers as Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu or Dignāga, all of whom lived long after the Buddha. A comparison of Aristotle with the Buddha himself is a rather problematic enterprise, open to justified criticism. Aristotle, as a theoretical thinker, was interested in "what is", "existence", "being qua being" (to ti en einai). He inquired into those very matters which the Buddha, as a practical religious thinker, considered to be completely useless, futile, not leading to the nirvāṇa. Nevertheless, both of them – though incompatible with one another in their mode of thought – agreed at least about one very important and existential point: they clearly realised the extreme difficulty of attaining the ideal (ethical for Aristotle and religious for the Buddha). As far as this ideal is associated for both of them with the mean (or the middle), I will call it "the difficult task of attaining the mean". Both understood the mean as something more complex and more intricate than an equal distance from opposite ends, an arithmetical mean, or a mechanical equilibrium (equipoise). They presented the mean regarding human beings as a state (condition) which is never given a priori, established spontaneously, or found by pure chance, but, on the contrary, is the subject of a constantly renewable creative search. In these general, and, as one can see, quite antiseptic terms, I will try to work out some purposes common to both thinkers. Any specification of these in terms of particular tasks, goals, conceptions and teachings leads us to abandon the sphere of generalities and to speak about differences.

The first fundamental difference proceeds from the obvious fact that for Aristotle the mean was one of the crucially important ontological and metaphysical ideas, while for the Buddha it was rather a methodological principle exemplified in a system of methods aiming at the attaining of the nirvāṇa – the final "blowing out" or "extinction" of sufferings. But in the time of the Buddha the middle was not yet a symbol of a certain ontological principle, which it had become later by the time of Nāgārjuna and his school, called "Mādhyamaka", "The Middle one".

ARISTOTLE'S DOCTRINE OF THE MEAN

We can come across the idea of the mean in practically all the branches of Aristotle's doctrine, from ontology and metaphysics to ethics and poli-

tics. Aristotle argues that one can detect the mean “in everything continuous and divisible” if “there is excess and deficiency”. And the basis of this continuity is a motion, “for motion is continuous and action is motion” (Eud. Eth II 3. 1220b 21-35). In other words, the mean is characteristic of something continuous, existing in the form of arithmetical progression (from deficiency to excess), as well as of something dynamic, changeable and complex. In ethics, it is a virtue; in a syllogism – a middle term; in a state – a middle class; in time – a “now”; in man – a soul. But for every thing or field of human activity mentioned, its mean is the only static and not developing point – a point of stable equilibrium in balancing between “excess” and “deficiency”.

The intricacy of this term (the mean) is deepened by some symptomatic inconsistency between the principles of the discourse proclaimed by Aristotle himself and the real foundation of his philosophy. He repeatedly affirmed the principle of the excluded middle and the logical impossibility for something having contrary characteristics (for instance, *Metaphysics* 1011b 20). However, according to him in the *Mind* (Nous), the knowing subject and its object become one autonomous self-subsisting “existent”, “what a thing is to be per se” (to on en einai), “final good” (to ariston), “actuality” (entelechia), first mover (to proton kinoyon) which is itself unmovable. All these notions presuppose a kind of closure, coincidence or concurrence between the contraries – a beginning (arche), or a cause (aitia), is at the same time an end, or a goal (telos). The latter is not only a result, a final moment of any development, it is present from the very beginning, or even before the beginning of things and processes. Thus, a goal, constituting a limit, presents itself both as the beginning and as the final cause and substance.¹ In other words, there is a hidden identity beneath the contraries.

The notion of the mean here comes to the fore – it is in the middle, that the beginning and the end, the cause and the goal come together. That is why “...in all our inquiries we are asking either whether there is a ‘middle’ or what the ‘middle’ is: for the ‘middle’ here is precisely the cause, and it is the cause that we seek in all our inquiries” (*Anal. Post.* 90a 10, tr. by G. R. G. Mure). According to J. van der Meulen, Aristotle’s “mean, when it comes to the limit of penetration into a true nature of things, is the Mind in its purest form”.²

Thus the mean is a structural and ontological notion – a kind of perfect, completely accomplished actual state (entelechia) through which “breathes” the Absolute and which, in its most perfect form, is the Absolute itself (Nous, Theos). The analysis of the ethical mean must be firmly based on these metaphysical principles.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines a virtue as that which is “concerned with pleasures and pains and disposes us to do what is best, while vice disposes us to the contrary” (*Nic. Eth.* II 1104b 25, tr. by Hippocrates G. Apostle). But “to do the best” stands for keeping the mean in passions, pleasures and sufferings: “... according to its substance or the definition stating its essence, virtue is a mean ... (Ibid. 1107a 5). According to its definition, mesotes (“mean”, “middle”, “moderate”) lies between two extremes: that of

the “excess” (hyperbole) and that of the “deficiency” (elleipsis). Mesotes itself may never be either in excess or in deficiency: “there is not an excess or a deficiency of moderation” (Ibid. 1107a 20-25). The mean is just the right amount of some action or feeling. At the same time, the mean is possible only when and where both extremes and a continuous transition between them are present (continuous in the sense of divisible, that is divisible at any point, as opposed to what is made up of distinct parts and hence only divisible between the parts).

As for the vices (Aristotle mentions malice, shamelessness, envy, and, of actions, adultery, theft, murder), no mean inheres in them as they are “bad in themselves”, also “it is impossible therefore ever to go right in regard to them” (Ibid. 20-25, tr. by H. Rackham.). However, there is no mean in temperance or in bravery, “because the mean is in a certain way an extreme (meson kai ariston)” (Ibid. 1107a 5, tr. by Hippocrates G. Apostle). It is important to stress that “extreme” here is something highly positive – that is why, I prefer rendering ariston as “excellence”, “perfection”. In this way, one can emphasize more clearly the identity of the mean and the ideal state of things.

The virtues definable in terms of the middle between the extremes are characteristic of practical wisdom (phronesis), directing our feelings and behaviour in everyday life. Aristotle calls them ethical virtues – ethike. However, there is a higher mode of existence which distinguishes man from the other animals – a contemplative life, or life of intellectual contemplation (bios theoretikos), with its special kind of the virtues: the dianoethic (dianoethikai), and the most important of them – wisdom (sophia). These virtues, like the ethical virtues of temperance or bravery, are perfect regardless of the context in which they occur (or a progression between deficiency and excess) and thus “moderate” by their very nature.

Aristotle sorts the mean into two kinds: with regard to things, and with regard to us (pros hemas). In the first case, we can find a middle in a purely mechanical way: “By the mean of the thing I denote a point equally distant from either extreme, which is one and the same for everybody” (Ibid. 1106a 30, tr. by H. Rackham). As for the second case, there is no mean which would be “one and the same for everybody”. So the virtue must be specified with regard to the individual capacities of men and according their particular circumstances: “... by the mean relative to us, (I define) that amount which is neither too much nor too little, and this is not one and the same for everybody” (Ibid.). Anyone who wants to be virtuous must decide for himself or herself what is “good” or what is “bad” in any given situation. That is why: “... it is a hard task to be good, for it is hard to find the middle point in anything: for instance, not everybody can find the center of a circle, but only someone who knows geometry. So also anybody can become angry – that is easy, and so it is to give and spend money; but to be angry with or give money to the right person, and to the right amount, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way–this is not within everybody’s power and is not easy; so that to do these things properly is rare, praiseworthy, and noble” (Ibid. 1109a 20). And earlier in the same work: “...error is multiform (for evil is a form of

the unlimited, as in the old imagery, and good of the limited), whereas success is possible in one way only (which is why it is easy to fail and difficult to succeed—easy to miss the target and difficult to hit it); so this is another reason why excess and deficiency are a mark of vice, and observance of the mean a mark of virtue” (Ibid. 1106b 30).

“To hit the mean”, “to find the middle”, “to hit the target” – all these expressions evidence the active and even decisive role of the moral subject, its mental disposition and volition. As Theodor Losev remarks, “the mean in virtue is not a choice between the preset contraries of good and bad, but it is a constant self affirming of the living being as determining these contraries”.³ Aristotle associates ethical virtues (as contrary to the dianoethical) with volition (which is for him a choice – *kata proairesin* – *Ethic. Eud* 6, 1223a 18), rather than with knowledge. In other words, a mean is never known a priori, it is a dynamic, ever migrating and elusive point, so that to find and to “hit” it one must concentrate every volitional effort. If vice presupposes a motion either in the direction of excess or in the direction of deficiency, the mean, once attained, becomes for us something like the centre of a cyclone remaining unlovable and unchangeable, or the centre of gravity due to which a thing is stable (Aristotle argues that the earth is fixed because its centre coincides with the centre of the universe). The highest goal which is pursued for its own sake but not as a means of attaining any other goal, is the highest good (to *ariston*), the good in itself (*tagaton*) and it is for Aristotle “an activity of soul according to virtue” – happiness (*eudaimonia*) consisting of reason or activity according to reason (*Nic. Eth.* 1099b 25-30). Concerning virtue, “with respect to the highest goal and to excellence, it is an extreme” (Ibid. 1107a 5). In this context, the extreme is also not an excess, but the highest point, the summit. Thus, as we can see, the circle is closed: the mean, from the point of view of the highest value (that of the *bios theoretikos*), tends to be the utmost good (to *ariston*), the symbol of plenitude and excellence, the highest self-sufficient goal. After attaining it, men continue their activities (because a happiness manifests itself in activity), yet they are not directed to any outer end beyond intellectual contemplation.

THE BUDDHA'S SERMON ON THE MIDDLE PATH

Now let us turn to the Buddha's famous sermon about the Middle path: “These two (dead) ends (*anta*), monks, should not be followed by one who has gone forth. Which two? That which is, among sense-pleasures, addiction to attractive sense-pleasures, low, of the villager, of the average man, not connected with the good; and that which is addiction to self-tortment, ill, not connected with the good. Now, monks, there is a middle course, fully awakened by the Truthfinder, making for vision (knowledge of the truth), making for knowledge, which conducts to calming (of the passions), to super-knowledge (*abhiññā*), to awakening (*sambodhana*), to *nirvāna* (*Mahāvagga*, 17. - *The Book of the Discipline*. PTS, vol. IV, 1962, tr. by I.B. Horner).

As for the difficulties of pursuing the Middle path or the Middle course, the texts of the Buddhist Pāli Canon, which we will take as our main authority in matters concerning the early Buddhist teaching, are very wordy about it while describing the Dhamma (Buddha's teaching, Truth). For in these texts, the Middle path is sometimes directly identified with Dhamma. The formulaic description of the Dhamma as "profound, indiscernible, difficult to accomplish, good, perfect, inaccessible to reasoning, exquisite, accessible only to experts" refers as well to the Middle path. In what does a Middle path consist? In the Buddha's teaching it is a system of the eight practical rules (Eightfold Path): (1) right views – right understanding of the nature of existence in terms of the Four Noble Truths; (2) right intention – the resolve to practice the faith; (3) right speech – avoidance of falsehoods, slander, or abusive speech; (4) right action – abstention from taking life, stealing, and improper sexual behaviour; (5) right livelihood – rejection of occupations not in keeping with Buddhist principles; (6) right effort – avoidance of bad and development of good mental states; (7) right mindfulness – awareness of the body, feelings, and thought; and (8) right concentration – meditation. The whole network of rules covers three main domains: moral behaviour (2,3,4), practice of meditation (7,8) and practice of knowledge (1). The most important among them is the right understanding, or right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*). As for the rules of moral behaviour (*śīla*), the majority of them are common to almost all ascetic movements in India and contain nothing specially Buddhist. Though some meditational practices (*samādhi*) were also not of Buddhist origin, it is important to stress that they are at the centre of Buddha's teaching and his contribution to the religious life in India is mainly connected with them.

Thus the main difficulty lies not in choosing the only "right" mental disposition among many "wrong" ones, representing excess or deficiency in some respect ("right" or "wrong" they are not with regard to some moral principle, as we will see later), but while systematically practicing yogic and meditation exercises to be in tune with the highest Buddhist goal, the elimination of egocentric attachments to the values of worldly existence (*saṃsāra*) and the attainment of enlightenment and the *nirvāṇa*.

While for Aristotle the ethical mean pertains mainly to a life in the polis, in society, among other fellow-citizens, – and his "extremes" also deal with the sphere of socially determined human connections, for the Buddha the "extremes" (*anta*) belong to different spheres and no gradual or continuous transition between them is possible. The first "extreme" (of sensuous indulgence) concerns the sphere of worldly life (though some monks can still be subject to it), and the second is characteristic of the ascetic way of life, that is the life outside lay society and outside social connections (the ascetic communities have their proper forms of community). So, the Middle path could not be situated in between these two modes of life, social and religious. It is rather on the monastic path, for the Buddha seems to believe that the final release is possible only for monks.

In Anguttara nikāya, the Buddha calls those who are attached to sensual pleasure “hardened sensualists” (āgāḷha-gāḷhā, kakkhallā, lobhavasera) and those attached to mortification, self-tormentors. The most important of Buddha’s contribution to this highly important domain of religious life in Ancient India is a certain detente in the religious struggle against human corporal needs. If we treat Buddha’s ideas about the Middle path in terms of Aristotle’s principles (virtue is virtue regarding some particular occasion or situation), we could call the situation in question – an attitude towards the human body. In temporal pleasures there is an excess, in ascetic mortification a deficiency, of attention to the human body; both are vicious. The mean lies in an attitude that, according to the Buddha, consists in making human body an efficient instrument of spiritual life and that demands certain attention to its physical and physiological needs. The Buddha himself, as we remember, attained his enlightenment only after renouncing hard ascetic practices which had let him to complete physical exhaustion, and after having regained his health. He accepted it as an inevitable fact that, to accomplish spiritual progress, one needs a body which would be in a “working state”, and for this reason one should always exercise control over all bodily needs.⁴

While Aristotle acknowledges that sensual pleasures may have their mean in the form of prudence (sophrosyne), the mean between libertinism (akolastos) and insensibility (analgesia) (Nic Eth. 1117b 25-1118a 2), the Buddha completely extracts sensual pleasures from the sphere of “moderation”. He regards all sensual pleasures as kilesa, āsava – these and like terms connote affliction, defilement, obstacles on the way to spiritual progress. The mean consists in their full neutralisation (with the help of special meditative practices, for instance the practice of mindfulness – sati). No moderation is feasible here. Sensual pleasures do not admit of a “mean” because, to use Aristotle’s expression, they are vicious “by their very nature”.

In this respect, the ascetic way of life is different from the sensual life in which the mean is not only possible, but highly desirable. Thus, if the first extreme is a “pure” vice (in Aristotle’s sense), the second is subject to different appreciations, depending on the situation.

In the *Devadaha sutta*, the Buddha explains to Jaina monks what is for him “fruitful striving”, “fruitful effort”: “... a monk does not let his unmastered self to be mastered by anguish (dukkha - V.L.), and he does not cast out rightful happiness and is undefiled by this happiness”. He compares an attitude of a monk towards pleasures (happiness) with the attitude of a man towards a woman he was once in love with: “...he may see her standing and laughing with another man ... and grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair do not rise up (in him)”. If that monk has eliminated these unpleasant states and has developed some equanimity, there may be a moment when he says to himself: “Dwelling as I please, unskilled states (akusala dhamma – V.L.) grow much, skilful states (kusala dhamma – V.L.) decline, but while striving against myself through anguish (dukkhāya pana me attānam padahato) unskilled states decline, skilled states grow much ... After a time he does not strive against his self through anguish. What is the reason for this?”

Monks, the purpose of that monk who might strive against his self through anguish is accomplished It is like a fetcher who heats and scorches a shaft between two firebrands, and when he has made it straight and serviceable, he no longer heats and scorches the shaft between the two firebrands to make it straight and serviceable ... the purpose is accomplished” (Majjhima nikāya, vol. II 222-228).

In his conversation with Sonna Kolivisa who has injured his feet during his ascetic exercises, the Buddha asks whether it is possible to play the lute if its strings are too taut or too slack. After Sonna’s negative answer the Buddha asks: “When the strings of your lute were neither too taut, nor too slack but were keyed to an even pitch was your lute at that time tuneful and fit for playing?” Sonna certainly agrees. And applying this situation to ascetic efforts the Buddha summarises: “Even so, Soṇa, does too much output of energy conduce to restlessness, does too feeble energy conduce to slothfulness. Therefore, do you, Sonna, determine upon evenness (*samatam*) in energy and pierce the evenness of the faculties (*indriyānāū ca samatam pattivijja*) and reflect upon it” (Mahāvagga V.1. 15-16).

Here, the key word for us is *samatanam*, or *sama*, *samatā* – “the same”, “the like”, “equal”, “evenness” (“the same at the beginning, the same in the end, the same in the middle” – in this way the Buddhist texts characterise Dhamma (the Buddha’s teaching).⁵

Thus, only that practice is fruitful and efficient which contributes to progress on the way to *nirvāṇa*. If a monk practising *samatha*, or elimination of the affects, has become calm to the point of slothfulness and obtuseness, a little bit of self-torture would do him good: it may brace him and pull him further to his final goal. So, under certain circumstances, the extreme of “self-mortification” is quite acceptable.

We can notice that the Buddha never suggests to monks to cheer up with the contemplation of a beautiful woman or anything similar. The other extreme is, therefore, completely useless for salvation. The Buddha’s attitude towards sensual pleasures is clearly expressed in *Mahādukkhakkhandha sutta*. He classifies five varieties of sensual knowledge: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile. The major part of this suttee is dedicated to a picturesque account of all sorts of miseries due to the attachment to these: affliction by the cold, heat, suffering from the touch of gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, creeping things, dying of hunger and thirst.

Any worldly occupation, any craft, may lead a man to the loss of his fortune, to failure, and thus to suffering from the fruitlessness of his efforts. Even in the case of success, a fortunate man will be afraid for his possessions and may as well loose them. The cause of all this is our attachment to sensual pleasures. It is for them that “kings dispute with kings, nobles dispute with nobles, brahmans dispute with brahmans, householders dispute with householders, a mother disputes with her son, a son disputes with her mother, a father disputes with his son, ... a brother disputes with a brother, a brother disputes with a sister, ... a friend disputes with a friend”. Because of them, there are battles, wars, murders, thefts, punishments, tortures and so on.

In the same sutta, we find a characteristic attitude toward a beautiful woman: “one might see the same lady after a time, eighty or ninety or hundred years old, aged, crooked as a rafter, bent, leaning on a stick, going along palsied, miserable, youth gone, teeth broken, hair thinned, skin wrinkled, stumbling along, the limbs discoloured” (Majjhima nikāya I. 184-190). Imagining a young beauty in this way, a man can eliminate his attachment to material form.

In this case, the Buddha has applied a tactic of introducing the antidote (*pratipakṣa*), which will be developed in detail in Theravada Buddhism. Both attraction and aversion (*rāga-dveṣa*) are affects, defilements, but the aversion or disgust may become just that right dose of poison which may serve as a good medicine. From the repugnance towards body elements (*Visuddhimagga* recommends contemplating these elements in their most disgusting form, for instance, the hairs in food), as well as from contemplating the different stages of cadaveric decomposition there arises a soteriologically relevant property of *vairgya* – a detachment, an indifferent attitude towards the material world.

The Buddha rejects sensual pleasures so radically primarily because of their capacity to produce attachment to something which is temporal and transient and thus could not serve either as a stable foundation for existence, or as a way to it. All negative sensations and emotions connected with pain and suffering have, in this respect, an important advantage: it is not so easy to become attached to them (except for cases of masochism, certainly unknown to the Buddha - to my knowledge he never speaks about pleasures in suffering). Moreover, they contribute to the disruption of these attachments. That is why we can use them for the benefit of our spiritual progress. The same holds good in respect to ascetic self-mortification practices; though detestable by their very nature, under certain circumstances they may be quite appropriate.

One example is from the *Vajjiyamahita sutta*. The Buddha explains to the householder Vajjiyamahita that his attitude towards ascetic practices is not a categorical one (*ekāntika*): “Indeed, householder, I say not that all ascetic ways are to be pursued. I do not say all ascetic ways are not to be pursued. I say not that every undertaking, that every effort in training should be undertaken and made. Yet I do not say the opposite. I say not that every renunciation should be made, nor yet that it should not be made ... If in one practicing austerities unprofitable states (*akusala dhamma* – V.L.) wax and profitable states (*kusala dhamma* – V.L.) wane, such austerity should not be practiced, I declare. If in one undertaking the training ... making an effort ... making renunciation, unprofitable states wane and profitable states wax, such undertaking, or training, such making of effort, such , making of renunciation should be made, I declare” (Anguttara Nikāya V, 190-192, tr. By F. L. Woodward. The Book of the Gradual Sayings. PTS, L., 1955).

As we can clearly see, the Buddha's strategy consists of avoiding categorical and general statements. He judges all these practices strictly selectively, according to their capacity to contribute to or to balk the spiritual progress of a particular man in a particular situation. (The Buddha is often called *vibhājjavādin* – one who knows how to divide or to analyse). It is the

best way to formulate the later Buddhist principle of *upāya kausalya*, the skilful means of converting (people to Buddhism). The Buddhist way to emancipation is not one and the same for everybody. The Buddha accommodates it to the individual character of his followers, but his general strategy is to find in each a certain point of dynamic spiritual growth, through which one can “grow out” up to the *nirvāṇa*. The Middle path is not a walk down a smooth and direct road with a measured tread; it is rather a manoeuvre across a minefield – one step does not ensure the success of those which follow. On the other hand, the Middle path is not a stable equilibrium, settled once and forever, but a constant declination to one or the other side, aiming to fit the ever changing “disposition of forces”. The most important thing here is not a point of equilibrium, but rather a point of growth. In this, in my opinion, lies the main difference between the “hard task of attaining the mean” for Aristotle and for the Buddha.

According to Aristotle, virtues and vices do not form constant properties of the soul, but they emerge only under certain circumstances (“at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner” *Nic. Eth. II, 1106b 20*). For instance: “A man is temperate if he abstains from bodily pleasures and finds this abstinence itself enjoyable, profligate if he feels it irksome; he is brave if he faces danger with pleasure or at all events without pain, cowardly if he does so with pain” (*Ibid. 1104b*). So, Aristotle, like the Buddha, applies a differential, situational analysis and in this sense we can also call him *vibhājjavādin*.

Nevertheless, he constantly insists on the self-sufficient character of the contemplative life (*bios theoretikos*). The image of perfection and plenitude is for him a kind of circle (among the movements the most perfect is a circular one). Having reached the middle (the mean), a sage finds himself at the point of equilibrium, the point of realised actual being (*entelechia*) which is stable and unmovable like the centre of a cyclone. The Buddha, on the contrary, insists on the transient character of all the meditative techniques constituting the Middle path. None of the good mental states which can be achieved by the Buddhist follower is self-sufficient or stable. For all the *dhammas* (mental states) are transient (*anicca*) and without any proper essence (*anattā*), whether they are “profitable” or “unprofitable”.

In the *Mahāniddana sutta*, the Buddha explains to Ananda what it means to be a released monk: “... when a monk attains these eight emancipations (*jhāna* - V.L.) in forward order, in reverse order, in forward and reverse order, when he attains them and emerges from them wherever he wants, however he wants, and for as long as he wants”. Thus it is important not only to attain meditative state, even the highest one, but also to emerge from it, that is to be free from the attachment to it. However much you like it and feel good in it, it is nothing but a transient step which must be overcome, not a goal in itself. As for the goal, it lies beyond all normal human capacities, including reasoning and rational understanding: “... when through the ending of the mental fermentation he enters and remains in the fermentation-free release of awareness and release of discernment, having directly known it and accom-

plished it in the here and now, he is said to be a monk released in both ways.” (Dīgha nikāya II.70, tr. by Thanissaro Bhikkhu). Thus, the resulting state is something beyond the other states of the Middle path, beyond all varieties of samsaric existence (past, actual, or future), beyond the human condition as such. It transcends the contemplative soul (to dianoeticon), intellect or mind (Nous) so dear to Aristotle. The nirvāṇa is a transpersonal state, quite the opposite of what a human being knows and feels in his or her human experience. We can say that the nirvāṇa is *transcendent*, whereas Aristotle's to ariston (Nous, entelechia etc.) having relation to the foundation of human experience, is, in my opinion, *transcendental*.

The other difference, which results from this one, is a matter of the moral or rather of the ethical status of the mean. Aristotle tries to justify the mean in moral categories. The Buddha resorts not so much to moral as to pragmatic categories: his opposition “kusala-akusala”, advantageous (profitable) or disadvantageous (unprofitable), has in view the practical effect of approaching the nirvāṇa. In discussing moral practices proper (which constitute only the third part of the Middle path), the Buddha accentuates not their “morality”, but their practical, that is soteriological efficiency.

The Buddha is often compared with a physician, but this comparison is justified only with regard to the means and not to the goal of his teaching. We can say that the individual defilement of the Buddhist adept conditions the character of the practices recommended to him in the same way as the character of illness determines the character of remedy recommended by a physician. However, for the Buddha well being and good health of a person are only a means for obtaining the transpersonal state, while for Aristotle they are a sine qua non for the moral perfection of the person (the ideal of kalokagatia).

I have already mentioned that the principle of the mean infuses the whole of Aristotle's doctrine. The same is true for the Buddha's as well. The mean for him is a support – in the most efficient mode of their functioning – not only of the behaviour, but also of emotional and intellectual activity, constantly renewed balance productive of spiritual progress, while the “extremes” are a pure waste of energy, a sort of entropy, binding a person to his or her samsāra, a circle of rebirth in the world of suffering. That is why, in his attitude towards so called “metaphysical questions” (the finiteness or infinity of the world, the existence or non-existence of the soul and so on) the Buddha never says categorically (ekāntika) either “no”, or “yes”. In polemics with other teachers or their followers he tries to budge them from their “extreme” (categorical) position, and for this purpose he points to the possibility of the opposite extreme. In other words, to arrive at the equilibrium he intentionally overloads the counterweight. For instance, to sceptics he praises the advantages of dogmatic views, and to those who do not believe in post-mortem existence he describes the benefits of this belief: if it does not exist the believer may at least win the respect of social opinion, and if it really exists he wins a double prize – in this and in the other world; as for the sceptics they are defeated in both cases (*Appanaka sutta*, Majjhima nikāya I. 403-404). In the

brahmanical traditionalists, believers in the supreme Brahman and in possibility of their “union” with Him, he provokes hesitation by asking them whether they have seen this Brahman, or know somebody who has seen Him, and finally he compares the believer in Brahman with a man who tells everybody how he loves the most beautiful woman in this land whom he knows not and has not seen (*Tevijja sutta*, *Dīgha nikāya* XIII, 19).

As for the “positive” statements made by the Buddha himself, all of them purport to offer a “moderate”, “middle” decision to the problems to which other teachers seem to give too categorical, extreme interpretation. He applies the *catuskoṇika* scheme (tetralemma) which tends to prove that none of the “categorical” statements⁶ is acceptable. In the *Acela sutta*, the crucial Buddhist doctrine of the dependent origination (*paticca samuppaada*) is presented as the Middle way between eternalism (belief in the eternity of soul – *śāsvatavāda*) and annihilationism (*ucchedavāda* – believe that the soul is destroyed at the moment of death). *Acela Kassapa*, an ascetic, asks the Buddha whether a *dukkha* (suffering) is a result of actions of the person himself, or of somebody else. The Buddha answers that none of these suggestions hold good, for the *dukkha* results from *paticca samuppāda* (*Samyuta nikāya* II, 18-21).

As we have seen, under certain circumstances, when there is a need to create a counterweight to another “extreme”, the middle disposition may coincide with the “extreme”. For example, there is the “neutralisation” of attachment to sensual pleasures with the help of aversion to the disgusting aspects of the dead body. In the same way, torpor is to be overcome by mental activity, and so on.

A certain “manipulation” of “extremes” in order to achieve perfection is also characteristic of Aristotle (see: *Nic. Eth.* 1109b 25), but “perfection” (to *eu*) is for him the same as “beauty” (to *kalon*). We cannot say the same in the case of the Buddha, for whom aesthetic contemplation was nothing but a source of attachment to the material world, and in that way, an obstacle to *nirvāṇa*. For the Buddhist follower is primarily a practitioner: he constantly tackles, that is, passes through the sieve of consciousness, all his mental states to eliminate those which have nothing to do with his progress to the final release (*nirvāṇa*).

The Buddha, like Aristotle, was sure that professional activity is not fit for a wise man: but for the Buddha it is because it is subject to sufferings, and for Aristotle it is due to the absence of leisure (*skhole*) and its character of being pursued not for its own sake but for other goals. On the other hand, a wise man in Aristotle’s opinion is not a wandering ascetic with his basic needs, but anybody rich enough to have leisure for a contemplative life, though abstemious in his sensual desires.

However, it would be unfair to Aristotle to see in him only as a purely unreligious, rational thinker, extraneous to any spiritual or religious quest. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle ascribes to a sage an aspiration to overcome the human condition:

Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine; and by as much as this something is superior to his composite nature, by so much is its activity superior to the exercise of the other forms of virtue. If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life (Nic. Eth. X 1177b 30).

His Absolute, Nous, is at the same time God (Theos) – not a personal God interested in this world, but pure intelligence completely indifferent to world affairs (as is implied in the concept of the unmoved mover). Though the status of Aristotle's Nous remains relatively indeterminate, and in any case it cannot be interpreted either as entirely transcendental, or as transcendent, it not just an accidental coincidence that this Nous serves as the basis for the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Porphyry with its transcendent One and it is not by pure chance that Plotinian texts were translated into Arabic under the title: "The Theology of Aristotle".

The Buddha's Middle path also has not remained a merely pragmatic methodological principle. Its transformation into a metaphysical and philosophical doctrine achieved its full realisation in the Mādhyamaka, in which the contraries, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, coincide, shaping the material world infiltrated by the spiritual essence ("Buddha's nature", "emancipation", "vacuity"), in the same manner as the material world of Aristotle is penetrated by "forms" or "images" (eidos) proceeding from the supreme Mind (Nous).

Thus we can see that the notion of the mean in itself, presets a certain structure of reasoning, so that even such thinkers as Aristotle and the Buddha – otherwise different – show some symptomatic coincidences. If the mean is estimated as the highest value, we must have the "extremes" and some difficulties (whether of ethical, metaphysical, or religious character) in detecting it. Aristotle seems to think that, once attained, the mean remains intact, permitting a sage (ideal person) to lead entirely self-sufficient contemplative life (bios theoretikos). On the contrary, even after stepping on the Buddhist path, a monk continues to face constant danger of losing it because none of the practices recommended by the Buddha is to be exercised on its own behalf. The highest goal, pursued for its own sake, the nirvāṇa, is another kind of experience – experience beyond the chain of causation productive of transmigration, beyond the person as such.

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NOTES

1. “Limit means (1) the last point of each thing, i.e. the first point beyond which it is not possible to find any part, and the first point within which every part is; (2) the form, whatever it may be, of a spatial magnitude or of a thing that has magnitude; (3) the end of each thing (and of this nature is that towards which the movement and the action are, not that from which they are, though sometimes it is both, that from which and that to which the movement is, i.e. the final cause); (4) the substance of each thing, and the essence of each; for this is the limit of knowledge; and if of knowledge, of the object also. Evidently, therefore, ‘limit’ has as many senses as ‘beginning’, and yet more; for the beginning is a limit, but not every limit is a beginning” (Met.1022a 5-10 tr. By W.D. Ross).

2. J.van der Meulen. Aristoteles. Die Mitte in seinem Denken, Meisenheim, 1951, c. 124-25.

3. A.Th. Losev. History of Ancient Aesthetics. Aristotle and the Late Classics. Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1975, c. 637 (in Russian).

4. In the *Gaṇakamoggalāna sutta*, he says to a monk named Gaṇaka Moggallāna: “Come you, monk, be moderate in eating; you should take food reflecting carefully, not for fun, or indulgence or personal charm, or beautification, but taking just enough for maintaining this body and keeping it going, for keeping it unharmed, for furthering the Brahma-faring, with the thought: ‘Thus will I crush out an old feeling, and I will not allow a new feeling to arise, and then there will be for me subsistence and blamelessness and abiding in comfort’” (Majjhima nikāya, Vol. III (2), L., PTS, 1959, tr. By B. Horner).

5. We also find the identification of the mean with sameness or evenness in Aristotle: “Now of everything that is continuous and divisible, it is possible to take the larger part, or the smaller part, or an equal part, and these parts may be larger, smaller, and equal either with respect to the thing itself or relatively to us; the equal part being a mean between excess and deficiency” (Nic.Eth II 1106a 4).

6. 1) A is P, 2) A is not P, 3) A is P and A is not P, 4) A is neither P, nor no-P.

Chapter XVII

L. Tolstoy's Non-Resistance Teaching and D. Ikeda's Idea of Non-Violence: A Comparative Essay

Eguchi Mitsuru

This paper represents an effort to provide a comparative study of two humanistic teachings that have one focal point—that is the concept of non-violence. Both teachings emerged in the framework of different religious and cultural traditions, Tolstoy's in Christianity and Daisaku Ikeda's in Buddhism.

Tolstoy's non-resistance teaching is derived from the philosophical interpretation of the New Testament's commandment on interdicting the usage of violence to resist evil.

Daisaku Ikeda is a Japanese writer, poet, philosopher, President of a lay Buddhist organization *Soka Gakkai*, committed to promoting humanistic ideas, laid in the base of the "Soka" movement and developed by himself.

The *Soka Gakkai's* concept of non-violence is based on Buddhist humanism rooted in the *Lotus Sutra* as preached by the Japanese monk Nichiren (1222-1282). The name *Soka Gakkai* society to some extent clarifies its ideology: *Soka Gakkai* means 'Value Creating Society.' *Soka Gakkai*, founded in 1930 by Tolstoy's contemporary enlightener and philosopher, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871 – 1944), has a membership of over ten million people and more than 180 countries of the world including Japan. Its mission is to disseminate humanistic values all over the world. However, its field is not restricted to religious practice and Buddhist teaching, but includes spheres of culture, education, and peace movement.

A comparative study of these two teachings is of certain interest due also to the problem of the interaction between cultural and religious traditions. L. Tolstoy was seriously interested in other religious convictions and teachings, particularly in Buddhism. The Japanese intellectuals positively welcomed Tolstoy's ideas on non-resistance from the very beginning; these ideas are popular till today.

His interpretation of Buddhist humanism is characterized by his search for universal human values that are beyond religious and cultural boundaries. In his lectures and articles, Daisaku Ikeda often interprets Buddhist humanism by using parallels with other cultures and thinkers. No wonder Leo Tolstoy's words are frequently cited by the Japanese thinker who points to the resonance between Tolstoy's and Buddhist teachings.¹

Tolstoy's principle of non-resistance implies total denial of violence. In a broad sense this includes—not only physical assault but any type of enforcement without a person's consent, even if it has the prevention of evil as a

purpose. The *Soka Gakkai's* teaching expresses the idea of non-violence in the form of respect for the inviolability of human dignity. This principle implies total rejection of use of any type force, —including moral and psychological pressure.

THE IDEA OF LIFE AND CONCEPTS OF HUMAN NATURE IN TOLSTOY'S AND IKEDA'S TEACHINGS

Let us analyze major ideas that form the basis Tolstoy's non-violence concept and the *Ikeda's* ideas.

The concept of life is one of such basic ideas.

The teachings of Tolstoy and of Ikeda appear to be close to each other because both consider "Life" to be not only a category of philosophy, but an absolute value as well, which sets up a hierarchy of other values. "The recognition of life of every man as sacred is the first and only basis of all ethics,"² wrote Tolstoy.

Makiguchi Tsunesaburo, father founder of the *Soka Gakkai*, argues in his philosophical work "Theory of Values" that the source of all values is a will for life that is an attribute of human beings—all living nature and an absolute value.³ In his axiological system, values embrace everything that serves to safeguard and support life. Therefore the programmatic principle of the *Soka Gakkai* movement is the 'creation of positive values' based the idea of sacred dignity of life.⁴ According to Ikeda, "highest value must be attached to the dignity of life as a universal standard."⁵

Turning to the essence of life Tolstoy argues that "authentic human life flows beyond time and space".⁶ He sees a parallel between the human life from the birth to death, and a day from the moment of awakening to going sleep. In the framework of his worldview, authentic life has neither a starting point nor end; authentic life exists only where the future meets the past. According to Tolstoy, death takes away the flesh and temporary consciousness, but it cannot take away the quintessence of life. Tolstoy's interpretation of life is directly connected to the notion of God. In his "Confession" Tolstoy articulates the following logic: if a man exists, there should be a reason, which is called God. However, interpretation of God as the Creator and Precursor brings about neither vital energy nor joy. When a person, who believes in the existence of life's source, is actively seeking God, only then does God reveal Himself and give this person an opportunity to feel the joy of life.

The notion of *God* for the Russian thinker expresses the idea of "where I am going and whom I will come to?"⁷ It is He who is the beginning of all beginnings, the ultimate sense and principle of life.⁸

According to Ikeda's interpretation of Buddhist cosmology, every person's life forms a common entity with the Universe. In other words, the former derives from the individualization of the latter. The basis of life of an individual, which provides him with active vital energy, is perceived as a law that is the source of different phenomena of the Universe and establishes organic order among them. This law embraces all living and non-living crea-

tures including Man who is able to feel Him inside of himself as an absolute spiritual nature. The source of evolution that takes place in conformity with this universal law, according to Ikeda's words, is "the compassion or Love expressed as a longing for harmony embracing all beings."

The Buddhist notion of the 'law' (*dharma*) as the ultimate principle of justice and Tolstoy's definition of the God are intrinsically close to each other: "Besides all that is corporeal within us, and in the entire universe, we know something incorporeal which gives life to our body and is connected with it. This incorporeal something, connected with our body, we call our soul. The same incorporeal something, but not connected with anything, and giving life to everything that lives, we call God".⁹

The understanding of the authentic human nature is a key point of any religious, philosophic and ethic concept. Therefore, to compare the teachings of Tolstoy and the Ikeda, let us turn to their perceptions of human nature.

Tolstoy's interpretation of the divinity of human life derives from his understanding of the God. In his view, God is present at the same time in every human being as well as in Himself; God is "in heaven, that is, in the limitless universe, and He is also in the soul of man."¹⁰ However, "To know God is possible only within oneself."¹¹ Until a person finds the God in his/her soul, it is impossible to find Him anywhere else. The God is comprehensible only *in the form of Love*.¹²

Tolstoy's conviction in the presence of divine nature in every individual is the basis of his concept of non-resistance. Recognizing divine nature in all people, an individual is thus unable to dominate over other people and loses the motivation to dictate to them as per his will.

In turn, Ikeda interprets human life in the context of the Buddhist teaching propounded on the notion of the existence of the Buddha nature—the ultimate spiritual essence of the Man. Ikeda interprets the absolute value of every human life by the presence of the Buddha nature—the ultimate spiritual source that can be understood and revealed by strictly following the Law that governs the Universe.

Ikeda links the Buddhist interpretation of the Buddha nature hidden in every human being with Tolstoy's maxim¹³: "One cannot understand God by mental effort. We know He exists; but it is due not to mental efforts but due to the inner feeling. He is within us. In order to become a true personality, a human being needs to create God inside of himself."¹⁴

To realize 'the divine essence' in Tolstoy's concept or 'Buddha nature' means to reveal one's authentic nature.

The conflicted character of human existence that provokes the feeling of superiority and aggressiveness, in Tolstoy's expression, derives from the existence of a 'bestial essence' in human beings. This conflict can be resolved only by means of uncovering the universal 'ego,' which is identical to the law of the Universe or, in Tolstoy's words, to the "submission of the bestial personality to the power of the reason."

Ikeda equates the feeling of superiority and aggressiveness to the small ego of human beings. Ikeda views the transition from the 'small ego'

to the 'universal ego' as an expansion of the framework of the 'small ego' boundaries to the cosmic scale. This experience is necessary to achieve an absolute unbreakable happiness because the ultimate spiritual nature hidden in every individual is nothing other than the foundation of life. And this foundation is the same as the origin of life in the Universe.

The relativity of notions of the Good and the Evil constitutes one more important point in the concept of non-violence. According to Ikeda, one tends to consider oneself an instrument of the Good, and a person who differs from him/her as an instrument of the Evil. Tolstoy's arguments in favor of the idea of non-resistance stem from his recognition of the varied criterions of Evil. He argues, "For a person who comprehends life as it really is, there is no Evil."¹⁵ At the same time, Tolstoy was sure that the so-called Evil plays the role of "a sharpening stone that is necessary for preventing the human soul from getting rusty."¹⁶ In other words, it is a test of sorts on the road to uncovering the divine nature.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to think that the "ultimate human spiritual essence" exposes itself spontaneously; it implies a conscious process of cognition, which, from the point of view of both thinkers, consists in the practice of Love and Compassion.

PRACTICE OF LOVE AND COMPASSION

Love, according to Tolstoy, is not a norm of human conduct but a natural aspiration of the soul. All human beings want to love and to be loved. We are all aware of Love's irresistible attractive force; however, all of us have repeatedly been witnesses to countless cases when the passionate, but fragile, love fades away or turns into a hatred. Why does this sacred and highly desired sentiment turn into a tragedy? The answer, in Tolstoy's and Ikeda's views, can be found in human egocentrism. Egoists may love their wives, children because they benefit from this feeling in terms of personal comfort. At the same time, "to love means in general to do Good."¹⁷ The predilection (inclination) in the place of love, according to Tolstoy, "does not possess the chief characteristic of love: activity, which has for object and result—welfare."¹⁸ In Tolstoy's definition, love implies the mission of serving the people, in which an individual reveals the divine in himself: "In evil movements one does not feel God, one doubts Him. And salvation is always in one thing alone—and it is sure: cease to think about God, but think of His law only and fulfill it, love all men, doubts will vanish, and you will find God again."¹⁹ Thus, the Love takes the upper hand over the egoistic essence of human beings.

As a method for overcoming egoism Ikeda suggests the practice of compassion, which should substitute (but not destroy) the egoistic 'ego' by the universal one. According to the Buddhist teaching, compassion implies an action aimed at the removal of the sufferings of an individual and granting him happiness. In order to take away another human being's sorrows, a person who grants compassion should be able to empathize with a person who suffers, i. e. 'to go through pain together.' It is in compassion that Ikeda sees the basis

of Love and Compassion. Explaining the meaning of Soka Gakkai's practice of compassion, Ishigami emphasizes that saving another person should above all make this person conscious of his\her spiritual self-sufficiency and of one's spiritual force and not keep this person in dependency on external assistance.²⁰ Obviously, physical assistance is not rejected but, if it is granted permanently and without consideration, it may bring about the feeling of inequality and hinder the spiritual self-perfection of the individual.

D. Ikeda argues that we are able to find inside, but not outside, ourselves an eternal source of vital energy providing us freedom from external circumstances. Our inner force inspires our never-ending self-renewal, i.e. our self-perfection.

He emphasizes the practical aspect of compassion since, in his view, abstract love or compassion is unable to confront the hate that keeps inflaming the whole contemporary world.²¹

As a matter of fact, compassion and love are also categorized as a type of passion. From the point of view of the Japanese philosopher, passions are not Evil and there is no need for their compulsory suppression. Such suppression could even result in an accumulation of negative energy in the human sub-consciousness.²² Ikeda views desire of fusion with the life of the Universe, of which he is a part, as the principal passion.

When desires of such kind are guided by this aspiration, which Ikeda defines as 'initial passion,' they turn into an instrument serving to create the authentic Good.²³ In other words, the backbone of his concept is not the call to suppress passions but their re-orientation to creative purposes in the practice of compassion. This idea is intimately close to Tolstoy's teaching, which boils down to giving Good in response to Evil.

Turning to the efficiency (effectiveness, successfulness) of the practice of compassion, Ikeda refers to a well-known Buddhist tale: Once a man came to the Hell where the people suffered hunger while sitting around a table abundant with food. He was surprised why they could not eat. The reason was that their chopsticks were far longer than their arms so they were unable to put the food in their mouths. Then he visited the Buddha Land. There also round the table people had chopsticks that were longer than their arms. However, all of them enjoyed the food as they made use of the long chopsticks to give food to their neighbors.²⁴

Ikeda argues that by practicing compassion and awakening up in ourselves and others the Buddha nature we are able to reinforce our positive spiritual energy and to overcome any passion in a most natural way. He emphasizes at the same time that the practice of compassion implies not only altruism but personal benefit as well, which is spiritual self-perfection. In Ikeda's explanation, this interpretation of compassion gets in the way of hypocrisy, which could turn the compassion into an instrument of one's supremacy over others or gaining public appreciation.

IDEAS OF SOCIAL RENEWAL IN TOLSTOY AND IKEDA'S THOUGHT

Tolstoy and Ikeda's concepts of social recovery derive from a similar interpretation by both thinkers of real human nature and ways of its realization.

The Russian and Japanese philosophers shared a conclusion that society can be changed only by the self-perfection of individuals. L.N. Tolstoy interprets it in the following way: "If one sees that the social order is bad and one wants to make it better, one should take into consideration that there is the only one means, that is, to make the people better; and to make the people better, one can do nothing better but to improve oneself."²⁵

D. Ikeda supports to the idea of social renewal with the help of 'human revolution,' which is capable of transforming personal destiny. This transformation results in the transformation of his/her family's destiny and, as a final outcome, the destiny of the entire state. Personal spiritual revolution is based upon the transformation of one's attitude towards life and to oneself.²⁶

Both thinkers look with special attention at the human, inner factor, which, in their view, is the principal driving force of social transformation. Tolstoy and Ikeda call for the resurrection of Man, and his liberation from slavery upon such external factors (in respect of his life) as the state and the market.

No matter how noble the guidelines for a social system are, this system is incapable of simultaneously pursuing this ideal, since people with their desires and aspirations execute the power. This personal and group egoism creates an illusion that, in Tolstoy's words, "some men may by force order or improve the life of others".

If a political system becomes an instrument of multiplying the ruling elite's wealth and a cover for its ambitious intentions, even the best system of governance will bring losses and suffering to the people. History teaches us that if in a society originally based on socialist ideas, aiming at supporting the poor and establishing equality, ideology takes an upper hand over the people's welfare, the people are deprived of liberty. And if in a capitalist society, which praises individual liberties, money is an object of ultimate respect freedom is a façade for anarchy. This society degenerates into a difficult environment in which few people can survive.

To create a society based on the principle of Love, which is contrary to violence, the constant self-perfection of every member of the society is essential. This is because violence derives from egoistic desires and passions, which pushes Man towards the use of force in order to gain material benefits and moral self-reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

The comparison of the concepts of non-violence from the point of view of their theoretical soundness and spiritual orientation provides us with

an opportunity to assess, first, the similarity of their sets of values and, second, the proximity in their philosophical argumentation of their sense of practical meaning and substance.

The teachings that have become objects for our analysis are so close to each other, due to their fundamental difference from normative ethics or so-called moral philosophy since the mandatory aspect is absent in them or very weak. The principle of non-violence disregards any pressures, including any obligation to stick to patterns of ‘appropriate behavior.’ A person, who has realized his/her nature or has achieved inner comprehension of God, obtains a natural capacity for optimal modes of behavior and in no way needs any conventional norms. This world view is based on the Buddhist and Tolstoy theories of non-violence. A person, who has overcome the dual state of consciousness that opposes one to the rest of the outer world is permeated by love towards this world and enjoys a harmony of existence within it. When a human being becomes conscious of one’s inseparability from the rest of the world and feels oneself a particle of the stream of life, this person begins to take care of all living creatures as of oneself, demonstrating compassion with them.

In both teachings Life is an ultimate goal and value as well as a value criterion; self-realization is at the top of instrumental values.

Tolstoy’s teaching on non-resistance and Ikeda’s idea of non-violence are closely associated with each other since they derive from one basic prerequisite for improving the life standards of humans, and this prerequisite is found not in the outer world but in realm of humans. Therefore, they are actually teachings of self-making or self-realization and self-perfection.

Detailed analysis of the basic ideas and notions of Tolstoy’s concept of non-resistance gives grounds for an assumption of the philosopher’s positive perception of the Mahayana Buddhism’s key ideas.

It is note-worthy that the idea of the presence of the Buddha nature in every human being, which is preached by Ikeda as in the *Lotus Sutra*, is actually in harmony with Tolstoy’s corresponding idea on the presence of a divine nature in individuals. This idea has been reconfirmed by in-depth explorations of the problem by a Russian of oriental studies, A.N. Ignatovich.²⁷

As for L.N. Tolstoy’s attitude towards Buddhism, in many of his publications he mentioned the Buddhist teachings as truthful teachings of life. His assessment of the Buddhism seems to be that of a pessimistic religion. This may be explained by the European understanding of Buddhism as mainly the *Hinayana* teaching, which formulated the goal of repealing the passions in order to reach *nirvana*, while the European thought of that time demonstrated only the first symptoms of interest toward the *Mahayana* Buddhism. Nevertheless, Tolstoy was already aware of this teaching, as he referred with admiration to the “work by E. Burnouffe on the *Lotus* Buddhism,” which he said greatly impressed him.²⁸ During the writer’s lifetime, two translations of the *Lotus Sutra* appeared in European languages—by E. Burnouffe in French and H. Kern in English.

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NOTES

1. See D. Ikeda's speech in *Seikyo Shimbun*, 06.02.1999.
2. Tolstoy L.N. *Tsarstvo Bozhiye vnutri nas* (God's Kingdom Inside of Us). In: Tolstoy L.N. *Complete Works in 90 Volumes*. (Moscow – Leningrad: Khudozhestvenaya Literatura, 1928—1958), vol. 28, p. 246. This edition is referred to in all cases of quoting Tolstoy's texts with references to only respective volumes and pages (with the exception of specially indicated cases).
3. Makiguchi T. *Kachi ron* (Theory of Values), Tokyo, Daisanbummeisha, 1979, p. 123
4. His area of activity was not limited by religious and philosophic enlightenment but embraces spheres of culture, education, and peace movement.
5. Ikeda D. *Nijuisseiki-e-no taiwa* (Dialogues for 21 Century). In: *Ikeda D. Complete Works*. (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1991), vol. 3, p. 643.
6. Tolstoy L. N., *Put zhizni* (The Road of Life). *Complete Works*, vol.45, p. 363.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 61—70.
9. Tolstoy L.N. , *Put zhizni*, p. 59.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
12. Tolstoy L.N. *Mysli o Boge*. In: Tolstoy L.N. *Complete Works in 20 Volumes* (in Russian). (Moscow: T-vo I.D. Sytina, 1913). Vol. 18, p. 71.
13. See: the text of Ikeda's statement published by: *Seikyo Shimbun*, 06.02.1999.
14. Tolstoy L.N. *Put zhizni*, p. 40.
15. Tolstoy L. N. *Put zhizni*, p. 43.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 433.
17. Tolstoy L.N. *O zhizni* (About Life), p. 386.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
19. Tolstoy L.N. *Put' zhizni*, p.67.
20. Ishigami Yu. *SGI-no shiso to undo* (The Soka Gakkai Int'l Philosophy and Movement)//Toyo gakuzitsu kenkyu (Tokyo: Toyo gakuzitsu kenkyujo), 1998, p. 148.
21. Ikeda D. *Nijuisseiki-e-no taiwa* (Dialogues for 21 Century). In: *Ikeda D. Complete Works*. (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1991), vol. 3, p. 630.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 592.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 588.
24. Ikeda D. *Hokekyo-no chie* (The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra), (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbun, 1998), vol. 4, pp. 240—241).

25. Tolstoy L.N. *Put' zhizni*, p. 221.
26. Ikeda D. *Hokekyo-no chie*, p. 41.
27. Ignatovich A. *Echoes of the Lotus Sutra in Tolstoy's Philosophy* / Dharma World. Tokyo: Kosei Publishing co., 1998. Vol. 25. P. 22.
28. Gudzi N.K. *Kommentarii k "Siddarta, prozvannyi Buddoi"* (Commentary to "Siddharta, Called Buddha") // *Tolstoy L.N. Complete Works* (in Russian). Vol. 25. P. 887; *Biryukov P.I. Biografiya L.N. Tolstogo* (L.N. Tolstoy's Biography). Petrograd: Gosizdat, 1922-1923. Vol. 3. P. 141.

Part IV

The Islamic Tradition

Chapter XVIII

The Philosophy of Power: Al-Mawardi and Al-Ghazali

Nur Kirabaev

As the political role of Islam considerably increased over the past 20 years there has resulted intense interest in the history of Islamic political ideas existing in the Middle Ages from the side of political scientists and lawyers, philosophers and specialists in culture, orientalist and specialists in Islamic studies. This is not random. The evaluation of ideas which existed in medieval Muslim society enabled it to trace the development of general mechanisms in the conception of “Muslim state” and to uncover specific features of the functioning of Muslim ideology as a well-ordered system of political, legal, religious and moral ideas.

On the whole three main directions in developing medieval political theory of Islam can be marked out. First, the ideas and doctrines by Muslim jurists (fuqaha) and authorities in religious knowledge (ulama); secondly, theories of the “Cities of Excellence” by Arab Muslim philosophers; third, so called *adab* theories developed in the genre of medieval Arabic literature a combination of the cognitive and the entertaining.

We shall consider the problem of power in the political doctrines by al-Mawardi and al-Ghazali, developed within the classic theory of state stipulated by Islamic political conception. The theory of Sunni jurist authorities is considered to be classic theory of state, where the primary principles of Islamic power doctrine were developed. They determined the main problems, as well as the number of sources which later on were used by many generations of Muslim jurists, historians and politicians. The classic theories of state were aimed to emphasize the religious ideals of Islamic state. These theories were guided by the Quran and Sunna as well as by the traditions and practices of the Muslim community under Islam of the Golden Age.

AL-MAWARDI

Faqih al-Mawardi (d. in 1058) was the author of the first classical theory of state. His main work is the “Al-ahkam as-sultaniya” (“The Principles of Government”). Working as a qadi (judge in Sharia court) he served in different towns of the Caliphate and finally moved to Baghdad where he was named the Supreme judge. Al-Mawardi was one of the senior counselors for Caliphs al-Kadir (991-1031) and al-Kaim (1031-1075). He also took an active part in negotiations between the Caliphs and Buyid Emirs and Seljuk Sultan Tugrul-beq.

The “Al-ahkam as-sultaniya” treaty had been written in order to consolidate the authority of the Abbasid Caliphs and limit the claims to absolute

power from the side of Buyid Emirs. At the same time, it is important to know, that al-Mawardi lived during the period of decline of the once powerful Caliphate and of considerable decrease in the Caliph's real role. He "was monarch legally, but at a time when real power was in the hands of others"¹. This work by al-Mawardi had been much favored by the opportunity of history, related to declining the power of the Buyid Emirs and increasing the power of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavid. **The latter in every possible way displayed his loyalty to the Abbasids and did much to raise prestige of the Baghdad Caliph.**

There is a question: if the real power of Emirs or Sultans was so strong, why finally did they recognize the higher religious and secular authority of the Abbasid Caliphs, concluding agreements with him and ordering that his name be mentioned during Friday prayers. The reason is that the state had not been considered otherwise than an Islamic state, a religious and political unity. If Emir or Sultan wished to preserve full authority he could not dare to ignore the fundamental law of Islam according to which the absolute authority of Caliph was based on the Quran, and the legal status of the position of Caliph was related to Ulamas' ijma. The legal Caliph was an authority not dependent on the real secular power of Emir or Sultan, but based on the higher law, which required absolute obedience in the way of fulfillment of religious duties. Thus civic loyalty referred in faith Sharia, but not to a secular regent. In theory at least, calls not to obey the Caliph's authority should not be carried out. But in the Islamic law there is no strict procedure for sacred institutions to defy **the legality of the election and government of one or another Caliph.** Therefore the key role had been taken by jurists and theologians (ulama) in accordance with the fact that ijma was considered as an impeccable source of fiqh. Since Umayyad times the regents had no longer been elected. They used to achieve recognition either by force or as a result of dynastic inheritance. Therefore further development of political theory had been related to selecting one of two ways by the jurists, viz. to correct the basics of Islam power doctrine in accordance with the real historical practice of the Caliphate and sanctify the legality of Sultan's or Emir's government, or insist on a strict following the Sharia and blame "illegal regents", who called Muslims not to obey secular authorities.

Al-Mawardi was one of the first to realize the need to bring into line the Sharia principles and the existing historic and political situation. The main idea of the "Al-ahkam as-sultaniya" was to provide a theoretical justification for the separation of authority and power between the Caliph in the religious sphere and the Emir in civic management on the basis of mutual agreements.

Being a sunni faqih, al-Mawardi proceeded from the ideal Islamic state of the period of prophet and four the "righteous Caliphs", which had been considered by traditionalists (salaf) as the only legal and just state. That is why he understood the Imamate or Caliphate as a higher institution based on divine revelation, but not on human creativity. Therefore, for the Muslim state it is important to define the Caliph or Imam as a substitute of the Prophet who bears secular authority. Though the Caliphate as a form of governing and type of Islamic state is not based on any specific Quranic statement, neverthe-

less it had been recognized by Muslim jurists as a canonical religious institution. Even Ibn Khaldun, the famous historian and social thinker of the XIV c., believed in canonical need of the Caliphate. And for Muslims the need of its establishing was their religious obligation.

Accentuating the divine character of the Caliphate and Caliph was important for al-Mawardi because the Caliphate had lost its past power by the XIth century. The need to strengthen the Caliphate was considered by him a religious imperative.

The obvious contradiction of historic reality is al-Mawardi's statement on the possibility of recognizing solely the Caliph., whereas the Caliphates in Egypt, Syria and Muslim Spain had been in existence for more than 100 years. Evidently that was related to the real threat which the Abbasids faced from the Fatimids' of Egypt. He thought that the Sunni concept of the Imamate could be opposed to Shiites' claims on power and rejected vigorously the Shiite conception of appointing the Imam. Therefore al-Mawardi was ready to recognize the election of the Caliph even by one elector as a legal act.

Let us consider the imam's duties and functions, Al-Mawardi hoped to revive the earlier power of the Caliphates and tried to show that the imamat is not simply a religious institute and a Muslim state. Therefore it emphasizes the personal responsibility of the imam for state business. It becomes clear, why the theory of the Caliph as such is only a small part in "Al-ahkam as-Sultania", while three quarters of the book was devoted to the detailed description of principles of functioning of the state structure (visirate).²

Al-Mawardi was among the first to clearly define the features required of Caliph, as follows: justice, knowledge of Muslim law, absence of any physical and mental defects, wisdom, courage and origin from the Quraysh tribe. This last requirement is in conflict with the fundamental Islamic principle of equality among believers, but like many other Sunni jurists he considered it to be in compliance with the practice which existed in the first Arabic state during the period of the prophet and his associates. However it is obvious that the last requirement was directed against the Kharijites.

According to al-Mawardi the main functions of the Imam are the following: consolidating and defending Islam and the Islamic State, establishing justice, assuring the strict following of the Sharia principles, tax collection, personal responsibility for ruling the state and setting norms for implementing decisions³. The responsibility of the faithful amounted to absolute obedience to the Caliph and helping him to fulfill his functions. Thus, the Imam's authority and the protection of that authority goes back to Sharia compared with those who trying to obtain power by force.

But al-Mawardi limited the Imam's functions to the religious, legal and executive spheres. In accordance with the basics of Islamic doctrine of power the Imam is not entitled to promulgate laws. The legal function was considered as an indefeasible right for umma's ijma which in fact always had been the Ulamas' ijma.

Apparently al-Mawardi's understanding of the important role played by the fuqaha and Ulama in the Islamic state was expressed in the following

statement: if the Imam becomes incapable to fulfill his duties and functions then the electors can elect a new Imam. At the same time he considered that any dismissal of the Caliph could be legal only under extreme and absolute conditions arising from a threat to the existence of the state.

AL-JUWEINI

In order to understand the fact that since al-Juweini some of the authoritative sunni jurists began in many aspects to deviate from the foundations of the classic theory of state worked out by al-Mawardi, trying to adjust Sharia regulations to the changes of historic conditions it is important to analyze those theories of state where less attention had been given to the legal-institutional aspect of power and more attention to efficiency in governing the state. The question is about the works of thinkers in which there was a synthesis of Islamic political doctrines and the sasanid tradition of State organization. First of all from the above works there should be noted "Siyasat-name" by vizier Nizam al-Mulk, the actual regent of the Seljuk empire in the period of 1072-1092, and patron of al-Juweini.

In this work Nizam al-Mulk tried to formulate the main conditions of state theory and practice, which were aimed to strengthen the sultanate as an actual power institution. The Arabic term "sultan" has the meaning of power or authority. Since the tenth century all independent governors projecting power under the supervision and leadership of caliphs' religious and moral authority had been named Sultans. In fact since the eleventh century the Turkish Seljuk established and strengthened the institution of sultanate ruled by a superior political sovereign who was able to ignore the caliph's religious authority. "Nizam al-Mulk established close relations among the idea of fair power, actual reign, the concept of true religion and the need for a stable and prosperous state"⁴. He recognized sultanate as a religious institution and the caliph only as a religious leader. At the same time Nizam al-Mulk considered the power of sultan as that one sanctified by divine authority. Certainly this was entirely in contradiction with the al-Mawardi's theory, which by that time had become generally accepted by the majority of sunni jurists. Therefore Nizam al-Mulk got well-known jurists of Shafii school for example al-Juweini and al-Ghazali to take part in the religious and legal justification of his ideas stated in "The Siyasat-name". The above jurists were directors of the an-Nizamiya madrasahs (universities) founded by Nizam al-Mulk and located in many towns of the caliphate. The patronage of art and literature which he provided to the most authoritative shafii school of jurists ensured wide support of the sultan's power from the side of shafii followers in a number of the Abbasid caliphate's areas.

Also Nizam al-Mulk had another goal while relying on the shafii school of jurists, namely to limit the claims to power from the sides of both the Fatimid Egyptian regents and the Alamut state of Ismailii rulers. Therefore it's not surprising that al-Juweini advocated the basic foundations of sunni political doctrine in the manner of al-Mawardi, while in contrast to the latter he

aimed also at justifying the legality of the sultans' regency. Al-Juweini rejected vigorously the Shiite Imams' statement asserting that the prophet secretly appointed Ali as his deputy. He considered that the religious tradition did not stipulate this and furthermore that the idjma, supported an opposite point of view, namely, that the caliph should always be elected but not appointed. According to Al-Juweini none of the educated people (alim) could deny the fact of election as the only practice used to select caliphs during a long period of caliphate history. However taking into consideration the real practice of assigning caliphs since the Umayyad period he, along with al-Mawardi, assumed the possibility of imam's election even by one elector from among the ulama. At the same time Al-Juweini or imam al-Kharamain, in contrast to al-Mawardi, had a different goal which became obvious when he stated its possibility of the simultaneous existence of two caliphs if geographically located at a distance from each other.

AL-GHAZALI

After Al-Juweini death in 1085 his ideas were developed in the works of another jurist of shafii school al-Ghazali (1058-1111). About 1080 al-Ghazali graduated from the Nizamiya madrasah in Nishapur, where he took classes under al-Juweini. When his teacher died al-Ghazali began to work for Nizam al-Mulk and soon was appointed director of the Nizamiya madrasah in Baghdad. In spite of his young age al-Ghazali's popularity was expanding. Al-Ghazali like his tutor had become a support for the state religion, but during a disturbed period of its history. At that time the threat from the side of Fatimids became clear. Three plots were arranged against Nizam al-Mulk. A short time later the grand vizier for sultan Malhik-shah was killed and then the sultan also died under unclear circumstances. During the years of his stay in Baghdad al-Ghazali, along with some books on philosophy, wrote two treaties: "Al-Iqtisad fi-l-itiqad" and "Fadaih al-batyniya wa-fadail al-Moustazkhiriya" devoted to political theory and practice. Practically immediately after Malhik-shah's death al-Ghazali left his post in the Nizamiya madrasah and retired from temporal affairs. He left Baghdad in 1095 and lived in seclusion for 10 years, periodically wandering in the appearance of a dervish. During this period three important events took place: a sharp escalation of the struggle to uncrown the seldjucs, the crusaders occupied Syria, and a considerable increase in ismailite activity which repeatedly made attempts against sultan Barkiyaruk's life. During these years al Ghazali finished his principal work the 1.5 thousand page "Ihya ulum ad-din," which gained wide popularity.

In 1105 at the instance of vizier Fakhr al-Mulk (the son of Nizam al-Mulk) who was in the service for the sultan Sanjar he took a position of director in Nizamiya madrasah located in Nishapur, but soon after the murder of Fakhr al-Mulk by the Alamouth ishmaelites in summer of 1106 al-Ghazali left his post and returned to Tus where he lived until his death in 1111. Along with many other books he wrote "Nasihah al-Muluk" containing advice on managing state affairs.

The Historical Circumstances

The course of Al-Ghazali's life was neither easy nor simple. As the most educated person of his epoch he took an active part in the political, religious and philosophic life of the Caliphate. His activities were noted for their versatility, what was a characteristic feature for many gifted intellects of the Muslim medieval epoch.

In 1095 al-Ghazali interrupted his bright career by leaving his post of director of the Nizamiya madrasah. He changed his style of life and decided to devote himself to searching "the verity". The step may have been motivated by political circumstances. French researcher A. Laust gave a good formulation for this new turn in al-Ghazali's life: "The whole life and conception of al-Ghazali was expressed in the crisis of 1095 when he decided to break off with this world and retired from it. Being before a secular jurist, Al-Ghazali, starting from 1095 had become an absolute skeptic prejudicing all, including the basic foundations of religion, but then overcame this doubt and returned to the faith only after joining Sufism"⁷⁵.

But as had been stressed by Abd al-Jalil: "In order to understand Ghazali it is necessary not to lose sight of the political conditions which strikingly match the decisive turns in his life and act as determining factors for both his ideas and actions according to the evidences of historians and even his works"⁷⁶.

In general the analysis of his works with respect to social, philosophic and political problems reveals that he permitted himself moderate free-thinking, but within the limits of sunni traditions. Most likely his position was that of a sunni jurist and moralist, who understood well enough that "Muslim religion had both sacred and secular sides because all Muslim sects were at the same time political movements, as well as khalam, fikh, philosophy or Sufism"⁷⁷. Apparently the service for Nizam al-Mouk could not be lived without leaving any traces. Al-Ghazali had faced the problem of strengthening the united Muslim state, which could be possible only on the basis of political centralization, which could be realized with the real power possessed by the Seljuk Sultans.

A formal diarchy existed in the Abbasid caliphate with two centers: the religious one managed by the Caliphs and secular center headed by the Sultan. There were as well continuous political intrigues, the ambivalent position of ulemas and fakihs and the permanent threat from abroad. All this resulted in further decay of the military-bureaucratic mechanism and the degradation of sacred power and the ulemas. Corruption had spread widely, not only among government officials but among the ulemas as well. Quite often the halo of holiness served as an effective means to obtain creature comforts. The ulemas' erudition began to act as a peculiar profession and outer sanctity as a commodity was always well paid.

Evidently al-Ghazali was aware of the consequences of such a situation in the caliphate. In different parts of "Ihya" and his other works it is possible to find criticism of regents and ulemas as well as thoughts about the

presence of external clearness and the absence of internal purity, about the situations when something forbidden became the legal, and vice versa⁸. He subjected to criticism the Caliphate rulers: “At our time”, he wrote, “most of the riches, owned by the rulers are illegal. Legal riches in their ownership do not exist or are very rare”⁹. Also he subjected to criticism soldiers serving the rulers, considering any trade deals with them as illegal. Those who cringed before the rulers were also subjected to sharp criticism. The Ulma’s style of life was criticized because he considered them dogmatists and people performing pseudo theoretical research. According to al-Ghazali they are pseudo ulemas – demagogues, stimulating crowd or rhetoricians eager to make a show in front of the great ones, many of them considered themselves unique advocates of the truth.¹⁰ “In our time” al-Ghazali wrote, “theologians have decayed, arrogance bent their tongues. They do not dare to address criticism to the rulers”¹¹. “Meantime the depravity of the ulemas leads to the depravity of the rulers, and their depravity in turn leads to the depravity of the people of the nation”¹².

As a sober politician taking an active part in state affairs under the direction of Nizam al-Mulk, he evidently had no hope for restoring the former caliph’s power, but was sure that the future of Muslim state was related to the institution of the Sultanate. It was necessary to take a different look at the political and religious problem: authority and power. History revealed the helplessness of the traditional sunnit dogma of one person combining both authority and power. Al-Ghazali tried to consider correlation between power and authority in a different way which became a basis for his political theory: “Religion and power are twin sisters”. His approach to understanding the nature of the Muslim state was rather different compared with his predecessors. His conception of the caliphate foresees unified, but not integrated religious and political authority.

Political Theory

Religious and historical factor. It is necessary to review those religious and theoretical problems encountered by al-Ghazali prior to analyzing his political theory. Sharia is a direct source of authority for Islam in general and for its political doctrine in particular. Knowledge (ilm) is required to understand the Sharia prescriptions and those who did that were called ulema. Considering the fact that there is no church institute in Islam and no recognition for religious hierarchy it should be noted that the subject of research by the ulema was cumbersome and uncertain and their functions were considerably broader exceeding the bounds of pure religious and religious-legal problems.

Fuqaha, Muslim legal authors, were limited to a greater extent to the work of interpretation within fiqh; however many fuqaha were ulema at the same time. Taking into account the role of religion in the caliphate, the Ulema as authorities in religious knowledge played the key role in both the religious and political life of the state. The whole history of the Arab Caliphate shows

that the caliphs provided support for the ulema and demonstrated respect in every possible way. In theory their authority had been based on the Imams' divine authority. But the ulema as the imam's electors and the religious association preparing ijma had a leading role in selecting those who would have power. Being the fourth source of Sharia provided their activities with divine authority. Thus they made assignments to power and kept it under their control relying on ijma authority, because in theory Islam state is not just a religious organization, it includes the sphere of legal power. The goal of the state was related to observing the rules of the Sharia.

But a special category of persons was designated to maintain the political functions of the state. The unity of this religious-political functions originally executed by the ulema was possible as long as the power and authority were located in a single person. Therefore the problem of nature of the power had never been raised in Islamic political doctrine due to the idea of the imam being both a secular and religious regent. Only the historical conditions of the actual separation of secular and religious power made al-Ghazali consider the nature of power in a new way. From that point on he does not speak about the uniformity of religious and secular aspects in the Muslim state, but about the union between religion and power. Hence, the term "united Muslim state" gained a broader meaning.

Another problem experienced by al-Ghazali was that of the nature of the state, i.e. the same problem of authority and power but from a different perspective. According to Islamic dogma this is the relation between the Caliphate and the *Sharia*. Since the Umayyad regency and in the early period of the Abbasids, the caliph had been more likely a representative of power than an authority. During the late period of the Abbasids the imam could hardly pretend to power, but still was the main bearer of authority. The political theory of the Caliphate most likely had been based on precedents from history rather than on the Sharia, which is particularly evident with al-Mawardi. At the same time as per the original sunni doctrine, caliphs had been directed to follow strictly the Sharia rules. In particular this had become apparent in the wide criticism of Umayyads' behavior which was mounted by their political opponents. The Caliph's authority had been tied up with the idea of following the Sharia as the Imam was considered to be the Prophet's representative. Sunni jurists had never denied the recognition of Sharia as the highest authority in the imams' activities, but quite often this was absent in their casuistic discussions in order to mask the fact of dynastic succession and hide the loss of real power by the Imam. This is not surprising because it was the historic conditions which determined both the head of a Muslim state and his functions. The legislative role of history could no longer be ignored. The political theory by al-Mawardi and al-Juweini had been transformed mainly due to the historic conditions.

It is necessary to note that during the period of strengthening the sultans' power jurists had focused on the problems of quality, functions and obligations of the caliphs. The problem of the caliphate's nature was practically left out of discussion, because the caliphate had been considered as

something given. That is why discussions on the problem of caliph's power and authority were not tied up with the nature of the authority of the institution if the Imamate. Al-Mawardi and al-Bakillani, al-Baghdadi and al-Juweini considered the institute of caliphate as a guide for the higher law. But it was a paradoxical situation when power, legality and ultimately the state was based on the formal religious authority of caliph who in turn depended on the real power of sultans.

For al-Ghazali, resolving this situation was related to a different understanding of the nature of the caliphate. His political theory differs in many aspects from the doctrines worked out by his predecessors, but al-Ghazali tried to hide this difference behind the terms generally accepted in sunni theory.

As a rule al-Ghazali's works in the sphere of fiqh, religion and ethics had the task of justifying theoretically the requirement of a strong central power. Also in these works there was extended criticism directed to the Fatimid's political claims and the rationalistic research on rearranging Arabic society by Arab Muslim philosophers.

The French orientalist A. Laust believes that the politics for al-Ghazali was a necessary part of religion and morality. It had been considered as an art of behaving in accordance with certain conditions of the life of a person, whose actions should meet the existing state order. In his political theory Al-Ghazali actively used the experience of the Sasanid state. Thus according to al-Ghazali "religion is the basis and state power is its guard providing defense and ensuring its stability"¹³. People have need for strong power in the person of the sultan, who by means of laws supports and consolidate the state order. These laws are the subject of Muslim law (fiqh). Therefore Muslim jurists are most important for the state and their activities should be considered as the major state function. In addition to juridical laws, according to al-Ghazali, there are religious rules and regulations which are the basis for the true faith.

Al-Ghazali's political doctrine should be considered from the point of his anxiety about civil war (fitna) and other disturbances (fasad) which could lead to anarchy and disorder. That is why his main attention was paid to the problem of the relations between the caliph and the sultan. His criticism of the political claims on power by the shiits (batynits) can be considered as ancillary criticism while addressing the main problem. Even the call of Fakhrudin Abu Ubeid ibn Ali, the judge of Tripoli, in 1107 for help in fighting the crusaders did not find proper political evaluation by al-Ghazali.

The Sequence of al-Ghazali's Political Treaties. For adequate understanding of al-Ghazali's political doctrine it is important to analyze his works according to their chronology: from "Mustazkhiri" to "Al-Mustasfa min ilm al-usul". Al-Ghazali examines two aspects of the "caliph and sultan" problem. First – relations between sovereignty (hukm) and secular authority (sultan). Secondly – religion (din) and state (mulk) relations.

He wrote "Mustazkhiri" in 1094-1095, and devoted it to the Caliph Mustazkhiri. There al-Ghazali reviewed the problem of the legality of the imam's power and proved the inconsistency of claims to lawful power by

the batynites. In this work, quite in the manner of al-Mawardi, he depicted distinctive features of Islamic sunni political doctrine and gave a description of the characteristics to be possessed by the caliph and the procedure of his selection.

In “*al-Iqtisad fi-l-Itiqad*” (“The Required Minimum of Faith”) al-Ghazali already gave a more realistic evaluation of caliph’s role in strengthening the Islamic state and raised the problem of the correlation of the caliphate and the sultanate. Based on a thorough analysis of the foundation of Islam political doctrine as well as the historic practice of the caliphate he had come to the idea of a unity between imam and sultan.

The Imamate theory of al-Ghazali had been based on three key conditions: 1) the power required to ensure the order in the state; 2) the caliphate as a symbol of the unity of Muslim community (umma) and its historical practice, and sultanate becoming an integral part of caliphate; and 3) the functional and institutional authority of the caliphate being based on Sharia.

Al-Ghazali considered that as the higher authority the Imam could be appointed either by the prophet or a ruling caliph or by a person obtaining real power¹⁴. In those times the imam as a rule used to be appointed by the sultan and only after that was the caliph supposed to be elected by the ulema. This is what al-Ghazali had tried to fix theoretically. He considered that the procedure of caliph’s election was in full compliance with Sharia rules, and the sultan actually became a constitutional power. After the sultan made an actual appointment of the caliph (imam) his candidature used to be approved by electors from the ulema and fuqaha. Following that there was an announcement in mosques and ordinary Muslims accepted it as a prescription from above. In spite of the fact that sultans appointed caliphs they had to recognize their authority, because “faith and power are twins”. The Sultan’s power had been considered legal even if he did not keep the Sharia rules. The most important was to recognize the Caliph’s authority. Al-Ghazali proceeded from the following: establishing order and security provides a favorable field for the function of Islamic institutes. This is the reason why he was not so strict with these characteristics of the caliph related to his secular functions. Thus the caliph was no longer a symbol of the caliphate’s unity, but an integrated part thereof. The Imam’s authority had been based on the sultan’s power and the power of the latter had been sanctified by imam’s authority.

The Sultan as a constituent authority recognized the constituent authority of caliph. Thus the sultan, being a secular ruler, provided for the integrity and power of an Islamic state. According to al-Ghazali fuqaha and ulema should act as a connecting link between the sultan and the imam. Interpretation of the Sharia in accordance with historic realities, justification of the legality of the caliph appointed by the sultan and the issuing of religious-legal acts (fatawa) embodying the functional authority of Sharia were within their political functions. Al-Ghazali came to the following conclusion: the secular functions of the caliph should be done by the sultan and religious-ideological by the ulama and fuqaha.

Al-Ghazali's later works revealed that in general he adhered to the opinion on the Imamatus stated in "al-Iktisad fi-l'-itikad". In these works he gave detailed practical requirements to meet the religious rules and regulations of the Shariat aimed to ensure the order and prosperity for the Islamic state. His work "Ihya ulum ad-din" makes most evident that politics for Muslims was not an independent science, but an integrated part of the religious sciences.

Besides that, seeing in the person of the sultan the only hope to ensure a united Islamic state, al-Ghazali supposed the possibility of absolute obedience to a secular ruler even in the case when the sultan violated the Shariat regulations and exercised an unjust rule. He considered the recognition of the imam's authority by a secular regent as the most important point. Al-Ghazali in his "Ihya" repeatedly warned against fatal consequences of civil war (fitna) and other revolts and disturbances. If the order can be ensured only by the sultan it is necessary to be under him and support him under all conditions.

In "Nasihah al-muluk" ("Counsel for Kings") he reviewed the main obligations of rulers to manage the state effectively. Taking into consideration the fact of addressing this book exclusively to sultans but not to jurists and caliphs, al-Ghazali underlined their great responsibility before God and others trying to show in every way that all their power was given by Allah. According to al-Ghazali the first obligation of the sultan was to improve personal faith (jihād); the obligations in respect to aliens is to carry out a just regency. Though many examples taken from the religious tradition, the history of Sasanids' state and Arab caliphate he demonstrated how unjust power had resulted in tyranny and tyranny in unjust power. Al-Ghazali appealed to sultans to take into consideration the opinions of the fuqaha and ulema on religious problems and the advice of viziers in state affairs. He noted the exclusive importance of the vizier's position and in particular the position of the first vizier in the state hierarchy.

In "al-Mustasfa min ilm al-usul" ("The Selection from Sciences on the Fundamentals") written in 1109 he considered the problem of society and state in the view of Muslim law (*usul al-fiqh*). This treatise begins with an explanation of the fundamental Muslim dogma stating that Allah is the only sovereign. Evaluating fiqh sources he underlined that the Koran was the only and absolute source. Sunna is valid to the level at which it shows and proves the existence of order established by the God. Accordingly ijma is valid because it indicates the existence of Sunna. Considering ijma al-Ghazali confirmed that it meant an undivided opinion of all members of Umma. But evaluating the rights of those who could be included in ijma and those who should be excluded from it, he finally came to the idea that ijma was an undivided opinion of jurists and theologians possessing the right to issue Fatwa. According to him the authority of the state related to the will of the Prophet, which is the basis of ijma and aimed to establish the religion of Islam. Based on this the state should defend Islam and the Islamic way of life. Addressing ijma is important here, because finally it had been designated to reflect historic practice of the Caliphate. According to al-Ghazali ijma in particular provided the Caliphate institute with authority.¹⁵

Touching upon the problem of *taqlid* as blind adherence to authority, and *ijtihad* as creative development of the theory of Muslim law, al-Ghazali insisted on the need for the general public (umma) to follow *taqlid*. He justified this statement by the following fact: even the Prophet's associates followed the way predetermined by Muhammad. Additionally al-Ghazali thought that independent search for the truth, justice and happiness could lead to social instability.

Evaluating the correlation between religion and state, spiritual and secular aspects, he confirmed their continuity and inter-dependence. Combining people on the basis of faith, the umma has as its goal to achieve happiness in the other world. Taking into consideration that the only sovereign is God, people should strictly follow the requirements of the Sharia. The sciences of politics, kalam, fiqh and ethics as ongoing show and determine the ways to reach happiness. Finally according to al-Ghazali political reforms are moral reforms: anyone who wishes to improve someone's life should start from himself.

Thus according to al-Ghazali the united Muslim state or Caliphate is based on the authority of caliph, sultan and ulema. The political authority of the Caliphate consists of these three components, and its existence depends on their balance and their close unity, with the autonomy for each being stipulated within the united Muslim state.

As we could see al-Ghazali managed to fit his political theory into the frame of traditional sunni dogmatics. He showed its ability to be flexible and socially adapted to **new historic conditions. His understanding of the united Muslim state differs not only from the "classic model" of the period of Prophet's rule and that of the four "righteous" caliphs, but also from his direct predecessors among the jurists. He had a good sense of political realism and religious responsibility, as his theory stipulated the possibility of replacing the bearers of authority and power. When the caliphs left the historic arena, the Muslim state continued to exist as a union of power and religion.**

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NOTES

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3. *Ibid*, pp.15-16.
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5. Laoust H., *La politique de Ghazali*, 1970, p. 9
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9. *Ibid.*, p.120.

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13. Al-Ghazali. *Al-Iqtisad fi-l-itiqad*. Cairo, 1972, p. 95.
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Chapter XIX

Al-Attas' Concept of Ta'dib as True and Comprehensive Education in Islam

Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (b.1931)¹ is the first thinker in the contemporary Muslim world, for the last two centuries, who has systematically defined the meaning of education and has coherently articulated a system to actualize it, starting, strategically, at the university level. Deeply imbedded in the *sufi* metaphysical and ethical tradition, he has also consistently argued and clarified that the purpose of education in Islam is not merely to produce a good citizen, nor a good worker, but a good man. In one of his most important and influential works he underlines that:

it is man's value as a real man, as the dweller in his self's city, as citizen in his own microcosmic kingdom, as a spirit, that is stressed, rather than his value as a physical entity measured in terms of a pragmatic or utilitarian sense of his usefulness to state, society and the world.²

He argues that a good citizen or worker in a secular state may not necessarily be a good man; a good man, however, will definitely be a good worker and citizen.³ It is obvious that if the employer or state is good as defined from the wholistic Islamic framework, then being a good worker and citizen may be synonymous with being a good man. But an Islamic state presupposes the existence and active involvement of a critical mass of Islamically-minded men and women. In a later work, al-Attas emphasizes that stressing the individual is not only a matter of principle, but also "a matter of correct strategy in our times and under the present circumstances."⁴ He further argues that stressing the individual implies knowledge about intelligence, virtue, and the spirit, and about the ultimate destiny and purpose. This is so because intelligence, virtue, and the spirit are elements inherent in the individual, whereas stressing society and state opens the door to legalism and politics.⁵

However, al-Attas asserts that Islam accepts the idea of good citizenship as the object of education, "only that we mean by 'citizen' a Citizen of that other Kingdom, so that he acts as such even here and now as a good man."⁶ The primary focus on the individual is so fundamental because the ultimate purpose and end of ethics in Islam is the individual.⁷ It is because of this notion of individual accountability as a moral agent that in Islam it is the individual that shall be rewarded or punished on the Day of Judgement.

A MAN OF ADAB

An educated man is a good man, and by 'good' he means a man possessing *adab* in its full inclusive sense. A man of *adab* (*insan adabi*) is defined as:

the one who is sincerely conscious of his responsibilities towards the true God; who understands and fulfills his obligations to himself and others in his society with justice, and who constantly strives to improve every aspect of himself towards perfection as a man of *adab* [*insan adabi*].⁸

Education, is thus *ta'dib*:⁹ the instilling and inculcation of *adab* in man. The Qur'an testifies that the Holy Prophet is the Ideal who is the best example of such a man, whom some scholars have called the Perfect or Universal man (*al-insan al-kulliy*).¹⁰ Thus the organization of administration and of knowledge in an Islamic educational system should reflect the Perfect Man.¹¹

The concept of *ta'dib*, if properly understood and competently explicated, is the correct concept for education in Islam, and not *ta'lim* or *tarbiyah* which are currently in vogue among Muslims all over the world, because *ta'dib* already includes within its conceptual structure the elements of knowledge (*'ilm*), instruction (*ta'lim*), and good breeding (*tarbiyah*).¹² Although the Qur'an does not use the word *adab* or any of its derivatives, the word itself and some of its derivatives are mentioned in the traditions of the Holy Prophet, of the Companions, in poetry and in the works of later scholars.¹³ *Adab* had a wider and more profound meaning before it became restricted to only a few of its many significations, namely belles-lettres and professional and social etiquette.¹⁴ In its original and basic sense, *adab* means the invitation to a banquet which already implies therein the idea of a good and honourable social intercourse which has been Islamized from its pre-Islamic context by introducing spiritual and intellectual elements into its semantic field. There the Qur'an is referred to as God's invitation to a banquet on earth (*ma'dabat Allah fi 'l-ard*), of which we are persuaded to partake by means of acquiring knowledge of it (*fa ta'allam, min ma'dabatih*).¹⁵ Al-Attas expounds the tradition thus:

The Holy Qur'an is God's invitation to a spiritual banquet, and the acquiring of real knowledge of it is the partaking of the fine food in it. In the same sense that the enjoyment of fine food in a fine banquet is greatly enhanced by noble and gracious company, and that the food be partaken of in accordance with the rules of refined conduct, behaviour and etiquette, so is knowledge to be extolled and enjoyed, and approached by means of conduct as befits its lofty nature.¹⁶

Al-Attas further refers to another hadith cited in the same work, which records the statement of the Holy Prophet: "My Lord has instilled *adab*

in me (*addabani*) and so made my education (*ta'dibi*) most excellent.” Al-Attas has carefully translated the verb *addabani* in that hadith as has educated me, and has rendered *ta'dib* as education, hence: “My Lord has educated me and so made my education most excellent.”¹⁷ Al-Attas cites Ibn Manzur who equates *addaba* with *'allama*, which fortifies his position that the right and proper Islamic concept for education is *ta'dib*.¹⁸ To my knowledge, al-Attas is the first to interpret and hence translate *'addabani* as ‘educated me’. The content (*maudu'*) of *ta'dib* according to early scholars is *akhlaq* (ethics and morality).¹⁹ The fact that the Prophet’s education (*ta'dib*) is made most excellent by God Himself is corroborated positively by the Qur’an which affirms the Prophet’s most honoured status (*akram*), as well as his excellent and exemplary ethical-moral standing (*akhlaq*).²⁰ This is further confirmed by the Holy Prophet’s statement of mission that he was sent to perfect good ethics and morality: *Innama bu'ithu li-utammima husna 'l-akhlaq*.²¹ The most perfect of believers in terms of faith (*akmalu 'l-mu'minin iman*) according to the Holy Prophet are those with the best ethics and morality (*ahsanuhum khulqan*).²² It is obvious now that the Prophet’s activities of teaching the Holy Qur’an (*yu'allimu 'l-Kitab*) and wisdom (*hikmah*) and purifying the Muslims are direct manifestations of this role of *ta'dib*.²³ Thus, from the earliest Islamic times, al-Attas has thought, *adab* was conceptually fused with right knowledge (*'ilm*) and proper and sincere action (*'amal*), and became significantly involved in the intelligent emulation of the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet.²⁴

Based on what he regards as the original Islamized meaning of *adab* and on an analysis of its semantic field, al-Attas proposes his own definition:

Adab is recognition and acknowledgement of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various grades and degrees of rank, and of one’s proper place in relation to that reality and to one’s physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials.²⁵

Recognition, is knowing again (re-cognize) one’s Primordial Covenant with the Lord and everything that follows from it.²⁶ It also means that matters and things are already in their respective proper places in the various orders of being and existence, but that man, out of ignorance or arrogance, “makes alterations and confuses the places of things such that injustice occurs.”²⁷ Acknowledgement is requisite action in conformity with what is recognized. It is ‘affirmation’ and ‘confirmation’ or ‘realization’ and ‘actualization’ in one’s self of what is recognized. Without acknowledgement, education is nothing but mere learning (*ta'allum*).²⁸ The significance of the above meanings of *adab* as they relate to the education of a good man is further underlined when it is realized that the recognition, which involves knowledge, and acknowledgement, which involves action, of proper places explained in the section above, are related to other key terms in the Islamic worldview, such as wisdom (*hikmah*) and justice (*'adl*), and reality and truth (*haqq*). Real-

ity and truth (*haqq*) is defined as both the correspondence and coherence with the right and proper place.²⁹

Several examples of how the notion of *adab* is manifested in the various levels of human existence can be cited. *Adab* towards one's self starts when one acknowledges one's dual nature, namely the rational and the animal. When the former subdues the latter and renders it under control, then one has put both of them in their proper places, thereby placing one's self in the right place.³⁰ Such a state is justice to one's self; otherwise it is injustice (*ulm al-nafs*). When *adab* is referred to human relationship, it means that ethical norms which are applied to social behaviour would follow certain requirements based on one's standing in say, the family and society. One's standing "is not formulated by the human criteria of power, wealth, and lineage, but by the Qur'anic criteria of knowledge, intelligence and virtue."³¹ If one displays sincere humility, love, respect, care, charity, etc., to one's parents, elders and children, neighbours and community leaders, it shows that one knows one's proper place in relation to them.

Referring to the domain of knowledge, *adab* means an intellectual discipline (*ketertiban budi*) which recognizes and acknowledges the hierarchy of knowledge based on the criteria of degrees of perfection (*keluhuran*) and priority (*keutamaan*), such that the ones that are based on revelation are recognized and acknowledged as more perfect and of a higher priority than those based on the intellect; those that are *fard 'ayn* are above *fard kifayah*; those that provide guidance (*hidayah*) to life are more superior to those that are practically useful (*kegunaan amali*). *Adab* towards knowledge would result in the proper and correct ways of learning and applying different sciences. In conjunction with this, respect towards scholars and teachers is one manifestation of the *adab* towards knowledge. The purpose of seeking knowledge and of education ultimately is such that the self will attain happiness in this world and in the hereafter.

For the natural world, *adab* means the discipline of the practical intellect (*akal amali*) in dealing with the hierarchical program that characterizes the world of nature such that a person can make a proper judgement concerning the true values of things, as God's signs, as sources of knowledge, and things useful for the spiritual and physical development of man. In addition *adab* towards nature and the natural environment means that one should put trees and stones, mountains, rivers, valleys and lakes, animals and their habitat in their proper places. And *adab* towards language means the recognition and acknowledgement of the rightful and proper place of every word in a written or uttered sentence so as not to produce a dissonance in meaning, sound and concept. Literature is called *adabiyat* in Islam precisely because it is seen as the keeper of civilization, the collector of teachings and statements that educate the self and society with *adab* such that both are elevated to the rank of the cultured man (*insan adabi*) and society. For the spiritual world, *adab* means the recognition and acknowledgement of the degrees of perfection (*darajat keluhuran*) that characterize the world of spirits; the recognition and acknowledgement of the various spiritual stations (*makam keruhanian*)

based on acts of devotion and worship; the spiritual discipline which rightly submits the physical or animal self to the spiritual or rational self.³² Jurjani's definition of *adab* is equivalent to *ma'rifah* (which is a special kind of knowledge) which prevents its perceptor from all kinds of error.³³ No wonder then, *adab* is also the spectacle of justice (*'adl*) as it is reflected by wisdom (*hikmah*).³⁴ Therefore, by synthesising the meaning of knowledge, of meaning and of *adab*, the complete definition of Islamic education is given as *ta'dib*, which includes the ultimate purpose, content and method of education:

the recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of God in the order of being and existence.³⁵

As stated earlier, al-Attas rejects the terms *tarbiyah* and *ta'lim* -- independently used or in combination (*ta'lim wa tarbiyah*) to refer to the comprehensive meaning of education in Islam, thereby indicating their individual inadequacies. He rejects *tarbiyah* because it pertains only to the physical aspect in the case of plants, and only to the physical and the emotional aspects of growth and development in the case of animals and man.³⁶ Since *tarbiyah* involves only the physical and emotional aspects of human growth. Hence the Pharaoh in the Qur'an, *al-Qasas* (28):18, can claim to have given *tarbiyah* to Prophet Musa. As for the term *ta'lim*, it is generally limited to the instructional and cognitive aspects of education. The significations of both *ta'lim* and *tarbiyah*, as they pertain to man, are already included in the meaning of *ta'dib*.³⁷ It is perhaps due to these subtle shades of meaning that some authorities tend to distinguish *'ilm* and *ta'lim* or their synonyms, from *adab* and *ta'dib*. Al-Attas would agree with the interpretations of earlier authorities such as Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn al-Mubarak. Ibn 'Abbas, commenting on the verse in *al-Tahrim* (66):6, "Protect yourselves and your families from a fire (whose fuel is men and stone)", said that it means "instruct them (*faqqihuhum*) and teach them *adab* (*addibuhum*)".³⁸ Ibn al-Mubarak has been quoted as saying that "We stand more in need of *adab* than a great deal of knowledge (*'ilm*)."³⁹ The usage of *ta'dib* and *addaba* in other contexts does not negate the educational significance of these terms, i.e., *fiqh* and *'ilm*; in fact they further reinforce it. For example, the Holy Prophet has used *ta'dib*, albeit in the metaphorical sense, to refer to the taming of horses,⁴⁰ which requires disciplining their souls to respond to the instructions of their master. The verb *addaba* has also been used in early Islam to indicate punishment,⁴¹ and in modern Arabic, the phrase *majlis al-ta'dib* is equivalent to the disciplinary board. Since punishment is within the semantic field of *ta'dib*, it implies that proper education should include certain types of punishment, that are intended to discipline the mind and spirit. Certainly the meaning of discipline cannot be reduced to refer to punitive aspects only but more importantly it should refer to the intellectual, spiritual and ethical.

It is thus clear that education as *ta'dib* is different from mere instruction or training. The distinction between education and training is being made also by many serious educationists in the West. They seem worried that modern education is more concerned and effective in the training of students for different professions but not in their education. While training can be performed on man and animals, education properly speaking, can only be carried out for human beings.⁴² Many parties have neglected the fundamental distinction between education and mere training because they have consciously or unconsciously erased the ontological boundary between man and animal, a condition which is at cross purposes with the Islamic worldview.

The term *ta'dib* as education has been rightly used primarily by *Sufi* scholars who characteristically championed the complete development of the Islamic personality through the proper development of the senses, intellect and morals. However, the *adab* of all Muslim students and professional groups, such as the jurists and judges, political and military leaders, musicians, teachers and students, has been emphasised as an integral part of education. The fact that *adab* has been linked to professional education and ethics throughout Islamic history is sufficient to reject the idea that *ta'dib* is basically limited to education at the lower levels, or to younger students and performed first by families then followed by private tutors or teachers.⁴³

The creative reintroduction of *ta'dib* as the comprehensive concept of Islamic education in the integrated and systematic manner by al-Attas is of great significance not only for the fact that it appears for the first time in the contemporary Muslim world, but more significantly, it provides an authentic, integrated and comprehensive concept and powerful framework for our educational thinking and practice. It is quite certain that *ta'dib*, as understood in a limited sense, was institutionalized in the form of personal instruction given by scholars and teachers (*mu'addib*) to children of Caliphs, Sultans, ministers, military leaders, scholars and wealthy families. This form was evident during the periods of the Umayyads all the way to the Ottomans, which has helped produce distinguished leaders of various occupations.⁴⁴ Just as illuminative knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is of a special kind, a subset of the wider knowledge (*'ilm*), in like manner *ta'dib* should be regarded as that "special" kind of education that is distinctively Islamic, compared to all the other forms of education (*ta'lim*). As we have seen, *adab* by definition, includes knowledge and wisdom. By "special" we do not mean that which has developed in later Islamic history and as interpreted by certain scholars such as Grunebaum and Makdisi to be mainly the education of the scribes or litterati.⁴⁵

Modern Western scholars who try to understand the great educational ideas of several civilizations concur that the Greek notion of *paideia* or cultural education and their understanding of an educated man remain among the most comprehensive and profound ever developed by the human race; yet the meanings contained in the concept of *paideia* clearly lacked the much needed spiritual element. It has been observed that Christian educational philosophy does have a clear spiritual root, but as evidenced in a larger part of its intellectual history, it did not show widespread and consistent inclination toward

the non-religious sciences. Modern scholars have found a better integration of the religious and the so-called secular sciences in the Muslim conception and practice of *adab*. Some even suggested that the many advantages of *adab* as education par excellence can help solve some of the crises in modern education.⁴⁶

SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

The educational philosophy of al-Attas clearly emphasizes the development of the individual; yet it is inseparably social in the manner and context of its fulfillment. He derives the inseparability between the individual and society and of human brotherhood, not from any historically documented social contract, but rather from the Primordial Covenant (*surat al-A'raf* (7): 172) and from the meanings inherent in the concept of *din*. The first person plural employed therein (*bala shahidna!* Yea! We do bear witness!) means that each soul realizes its individuality as well as its relationship to each other and to their Lord.⁴⁷ With regard to the integrally social nature of religion (*din*), al-Attas has carefully analysed and interpreted the basic meanings of the root *dal-ya'-nun* and summarized that the primary meanings of the term *din* can be reduced to four elements, namely, human indebtedness of existence to God, human submission to Him, an exercise of judicious power, and a reflection of natural human tendency or *fitrah*, which goes back to the Day of the Primordial Covenant. By further analysing the various derivations of the word *din*, such as *dana* (being indebted), *da'in* (debtor/creditor), *dayn* (obligation), *daymunah* (judgement), and *idanah* (conviction), al-Attas connects all of these meanings with cosmopolitan and cultured organization denoted by the terms *madinah* (city or town), *maddana* (to civilize or humanize) and *tamaddun* (civilization/refinement in social culture).⁴⁸

In another place al-Attas stresses that:

When we say that the purpose of knowledge is to produce a good man, we do not mean that to produce a good society is not its purpose, for since society is composed of people, making everyone or most of them good produces a good society. Education is the fabric of society.⁴⁹

An individual is only so when he realizes simultaneously his unique individuality and the commonality between him and other persons close to him and surrounding him. An individual is meaningless in isolation, because in such a context he is no longer an individual, he is everything. As seen from our brief exposition of the meaning of *adab*, it is clear now that a man of *adab* (*insan adabi*) as understood by al-Attas is an individual who is fully conscious of his individuality and of his proper relationship with himself, his Creator, his society and other visible and invisible creatures of God. Therefore, in the Islamic sense, a good individual or a good man must naturally be a good servant to his Lord and Creator, a good father to his children, a good husband to

his wife, a good son to his parents, a good neighbour to his neighbours, and a good citizen to his country. It is instructive to note that another term for *civilization* in the Malay language, beside *tamadun*, is *peradaban*, which denotes the comprehensive and multi-generational contributions of men and women of adab.

Although a society consists of individuals, the education of society cannot happen unless sufficient individuals are educated. Yet society, which is the whole, is greater than the sum of its parts.⁵⁰ Having said this, no Muslim who understands even a general worldview of the Qur'an would negate or neglect his societal duties, for he knows that even though God's judgement in the Hereafter is strictly individual in nature,⁵¹ yet His judgement in history is societal. This judgement of God in history generally does not affect the good men and women, except as trials, but sometimes even they may have to suffer if they do not perform their duty as required.⁵² Without doubt, such an integration of the spiritual and ethical qualities is the highest end of the meaning of citizenship and vocation.⁵³

Furthermore, the proper understanding and implementation of *fard 'ayn* (obligation towards the Self) and *fard kifayah* (obligation towards Society) categories of knowledge, a category which al-Attas develops from Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, would ensure the realization of personal and societal welfare. While it is obvious that the latter category of knowledge is directly socially relevant, the role of the former is generally thought to be only indirectly significant. On the contrary, mastery and practise of the *fard 'ayn* -- which is not the rigid enumeration of disciplines as commonly thought -- will ensure the proper success of *fard kifayah* sciences, for the former provides the necessary guiding framework and motivating principles for the latter. Al-Attas reminds us that the assessment of what courses and areas to be taught and offered under the *fard kifayah* category must not be a matter of personal choice only, but rather, should involve a just consideration of the societal and national needs.⁵⁴ In fact, according to Tibawi, the succinct personal objective of traditional Islamic education, which is the attainment of happiness in this world and the next, is more concrete and more beneficial to individual citizens compared to the vague general goals of society formulated by modern national governments.⁵⁵

LOSS OF ADAB

As elaborated above, one of the most fundamental cornerstones of al-Attas' philosophy of Islamic education is his comprehensive concept of adab. Naturally, his analysis of the educational, intellectual, and civilizational problems points to the fact that they are rooted in the external and internal causes as explicated elsewhere. The external ones are caused by the religio-cultural and socio-political challenges from the Western culture and civilization⁵⁶ while the internal ones are manifested in three interrelated phenomena; namely, the confusion and error in the meaning and application of knowledge (*kekeliruan serta kesilapan mengenai faham ilmu*), the loss of adab (*keruntu-*

han adab), and the rise of unqualified and false leaders (*tiada layak memikul tanggungjawab pimpinan yang sah*) in all fields.⁵⁷ However, it is the loss of *adab* that must be effectively checked and corrected if Muslims are to solve the confusion and error in knowledge and the rise of false leadership in all fields. He writes that we must first solve the problem of the loss of *adab* because knowledge cannot be taught to, or inculcated in, the learner unless he shows proper *adab* towards knowledge, its various categories and its legitimate authorities.⁵⁸

Since *adab* is an integral part of wisdom and justice, the loss of *adab* would naturally entail the prevalence of injustice, and stupidity, and even madness.⁵⁹ Injustice is of course a condition where things are not in their right places. Stupidity (*humq*), is the deployment of wrong methods to arrive at right goals or ends, while madness (*junun*) is the struggle to attain false or wrong aims or goals.⁶⁰ It is indeed a madness if the very purpose of seeking knowledge is other than the attainment of true happiness or the love of God (*mahabbah*) in this world according to the dictates of the true religion, and the attainment of His vision (*ru'yatullah*) in the Hereafter.⁶¹ Similarly, it is utter stupidity to attempt to attain happiness in this world and in the next without the right kind of knowledge and practice.

Al-Attas elaborates on some other negative effects of the pervasive loss of *adab*:

Authentic definitions become undone, and in their stead we are left with vague slogans disguised as concepts. The inability to define, to identify and isolate problems, and hence to provide for right solutions; the creation of pseudo-problems; the reduction of problems to merely political, socio-economic and legal factors become evident. It is not surprising if such a situation provides a fertile breeding ground for the emergence of extremists of many kinds who make ignorance their capital.⁶²

It is a truism that the world is increasingly functioning like a global village where education for intrinsically good men and women, i.e., men and women of *adab*, will be definitely more useful than education merely for trained and useful citizenship. This is because most important projects, whether economic, educational or political, are increasingly international in nature and significance, while narrow nationalistic agenda of multinational participants will undermine the proper success of such projects. Fast and efficient international travel enable good citizens of unjust regimes or organizations to extend their pernicious activities with greater speed and scope, and with more efficient ability to escape. Exciting developments in information technology have rendered national boundaries meaningless, conveying virtually limitless amount of information of various degrees of utility, good and evil. The potentially useful information explosion and its almost instantaneous global reverberations have caused innumerable confusion, not to mention the ethi-

cally, culturally and socially harmful contents. These developments require, more than ever before, that individual men and women be intrinsically good in the sense of *adab*. The intricately intertwining nature of the global economy would destroy the economies and millions of lives if citizens of powerful and influential economies sought mainly to profit their own short-term personal or national interests.⁶³ An educated person, a person of *adab*, is in this sense a universal person who understands and practices right *adab* in himself, in his family, in his environment and in the world community. A person of *adab* by definition, as al-Attas understands and practices it, can deal successfully with a plural universe without losing his identity. Dealing with various levels of realities in the right and proper manner would enable him to attain the spiritual and permanent state of happiness here as well as in the Hereafter. This implies that the planning, contents, and methods of education should reflect a strong and consistent emphasis on the right *adab* towards the various orders of realities. To realize this objective, a new system of education must be formulated and implemented in the Muslim community which must focus on the university. He has successfully experimented many of these ideas at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), Kuala Lumpur from 1988-2002.⁶⁴

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NOTES

1. For a detailed biography of al-Attas and an evaluation of his thought in the context of contemporary Muslim world, please see my *The Educational Philosophy and Method of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), Introduction. The present article is a summary of chap. iii of the book which, hereafter, will be cited as *Educational Philosophy*.

2. *Islam and Secularism* (Petaling Jaya: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1978), p. 141, cited hereafter as IS.

3. S.M.N. al-Attas, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin* (Message to Muslims). A long manuscript dictated to his secretary in March 1973. para. 14, pp. 51-52; idem, *Islam: The Meaning of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality* (Petaling Jaya: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1976), pp. 33-34, hereafter cited as IFOEM; idem, editor. *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education* (London: Hodder & Stoughton/King A. Aziz University, 1979) pp. 32-33, also idem, *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1980) p. 25, cited hereafter as CEII. I have elaborated this idea of al-Attas in my article, "Insan Baik Teras Kewarganegaraan" (The Good Man as the Core of the Good Citizen), *Pemikir*, January-March 1996, pp. 1-24.

4. *Aims and Objectives*, p. 6

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Aims and Objectives*, pp. 32-33.

7. IS, p. 70; cf. a hadith of the Prophet: “Whosoever sees an evil action (*munkar*), he should change it with his hand, if not with his tongue, if not with his heart, and the latter is the weakest in faith.”

8. *Risalah*, para. 15, p. 54.

9. *Aims and Objectives*, p. 37.

10. Cf. “the most honourable,” *al-Hujurat* (49): 13; “the beautiful model for conduct,” *al-Ahzab* (33): 21; and *al-Qalam* (68): 4; “a (universal) messenger to all mankind,” *Saba’* (34): 28.

11. CEII, p. 39; also *Risalah*, para. 47, p. 157.

12. CEII, p. 34.

13. There are at least 18 entries on *ta’dib*, *addaba*, and *adab*, many of which occur in more than one hadith collection. See A. J. Wensinck and J. P. Mensing, *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*. 7 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943), 1: 26; Nasrat Abdel Rahman, “The Semantics of *Adab* in Arabic”, *Al-Shajarah*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1997, pp. 189-207. In this paper Prof. Abdel Rahman painstakingly analysed the various shades of meanings of the term *adab* and its various derivatives, especially *ta’dib*, from about 50 major Arab authorities, and has generally confirmed the interpretation of al-Attas.

14. CEII, p. 36. F. Gabrieli, in his brief yet succinct exposition of *adab*, explains that in the first century of the hijrah, *adab* carried within it an intellectual, ethical and social meaning. Later it came to mean a sum of knowledge which makes a man courteous and ‘urbane’, and by the time of al-Hariri in the 10th century C.E., in the meaning of *adab* had become much restricted to a discipline of knowledge, namely *adabiyat* or literature. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. New Edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986) s.v. “*adab*”.

15. CEII, pp. 24-25; also IS, pp. 142-143.

16. Op. cit., pp. 24-25.

17. *Aims and Objectives*, p. 1; CEII, p. 26.

18. CEII, p. 26; IS, p. 144.

19. Mahmud Qambar, *Dirasat turathiyyah fi ‘l-tarbiyah al-islamiyyah*, 2 vols. (Dhoha, Qatar: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1985), 1: 406.

20. *Al-Ahzab* (33): 21; *al-Hujurat* (49): 13; and *al-Qalam* (68): 4.

21. This hadith is found in the *Muwatta’* of Imam Malik and *Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Cited in A. J. Wensinck and J. P. Mensing, *Concordance*, 2: 75.

22. This hadith is found in the *Sunan* of Ab, Dawud and the *Musnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal; cited in Wensinck and Mensing, *Concordance*, 2: 75.

23. The Holy Qur’an, *Ali ‘Imran* (3): 164 and *al-Jumu‘ah* (62): 2; also *al-Baqarah* (2): 129 (“He (the Holy Prophet) teaches them the Book and wisdom and purifies them”).

24. CEII, p. 35; cf. Nasrat Abdel Rahman, *The Semantics of Adab*, pp. 2-18.

25. CEII., p. 27. Based on this definition of *adab*, al-Attas ingeniously elaborates on the statement of the Holy Prophet quoted above (God has

educated me) in this manner: "My Lord made me recognize and acknowledge, by what [i.e., *adab*] He progressively instilled into me, the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it led to my recognition and acknowledgement of His proper place in the order of being and existence; and by virtue of this He made my education most excellent." Ibid., pp. 27-28.

26. The Primordial Covenant which is cited by all *Sufis* is derived from the Qur'an 7:172: "When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam---from their loins---their decedents, and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): "Am I not your lord?"---they all said:"Yea! We do testify!"

27. CEII., p. 21.

28. Ibid..

29. *Risalah*, para. 55, pp. 186-188; idem, *Islam and the Philosophy of Science* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1989), p. 22.

30. Al-Attas, "Address of Acceptance of Appointment to the al-Ghazzali Chair of Islamic Thought", in *Commemorative Volume on the Conferment of the al-Ghazzali Chair* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1994) p. 31. Hereafter cited as *Acceptance Speech*.

31. Ibid., p. 30.

32. *Risalah*, para. 47, pp. 155-157. Cf., *Acceptance Speech*, p. 31.

33. Sharif al-Jurjani, *Kitab al-Ta'rifat* (Beirut: Maktabah Lubnaniyyah, 1990) p. 10; cf. Nasrat Abdel Rahman, *The Semantics of Adab in Arabic*, p. 202.

34. CEII, p. 23.

35. Ibid., p. 27.

36. Ibid., p.29. Hence the terms *al-tarbiyah al-badaniyyah* (physical training), *tarbiyat al-hayawan* (stockbreeding), *tarbiyat al-dajaj* (chicken farming, poultry husbandry), *tarbiyah al-samak* (pisciculture), *tarbiyat al-nabatat* (plant cultivation).

37. CEII, pp. 28-33; IS, pp. 144-145, note 123.

38. Abul-Qasim 'Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri, *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah fi 'Ilm al-Tasawwuf* (Damascus: Dar al-Khayr, 1988) p. 284. Eng. trans. by B. R. von Schlegell. Intro. by H. Algar, *Principles of Sufism* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1990), p. 308.

39. Al-Qushayri, *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah*, p. 285; trans. p. 311. Earlier scholars did not use the term *tarbiyah* as a title for a treatise on education, with the exception of the treatise by Burhan al-Din al-'Uqsura'i (d. 1502) entitled *Risalah fi 'l-Tarbiyah wa 'l-Taslik* (A Treatise on Education). Most of them used the term *ta'lim* or *adab* in the title of the works on education. The earliest to use the term *adab* in the title of his educational treatise is Ab, al-Najib 'Abd al-Qadir al-Suhrawardi (d. 1169), *Adab al-Muridin* (Education of Students). Many who used the term *ta'lim*, such as Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji (d.1203), seemed to interpret education in the manner conveyed by *adab* or *ta'dib* for they did not limit the educational experience only to the cognitive aspect but significantly included the spiritual, the ethical, and the social aspects.

40. Al-Nasa'i, *Sunan*, 4: 6. Nasrat Abdel Rahman, *The Semantics of Adab in Arabic*. p. 195. Al-Attas points out that when used for animals *adab* is meant metaphorically, i.e., by analogy with its usage for mankind where its meaning is given in its real sense. Personal discussion at ISTAC.

41. It is recorded in the *Sunan* of Ab, Dawud, 4: 183, that a companion 'Amr b. al-'As asked the Caliph 'Umar: If a man *addaba* one of his citizens, do you allow the citizen to retaliate? Cited in Nasrat Abdel Rahman, *The Semantics of Adab in Arabic*, p. 195-196.

42. See for examples, Robert Maynard Hutchins, *Higher Learning*, chap. II, pp. 33-58; Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 18-20, 51-55; Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Mission of the University*, edited and translated by Howard Lee Nostrand, 1944 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), pp. 38-39; Robert L. Bellnap and Richard Kuhns, *Tradition and Innovation-General Education and the Reintegration of the University: A Columbia Report* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 3; Marjorie Reeves, *The Crisis in Higher Education: Competence, Delight and the Common Good* (Milton Keynes, U.K.: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, 1988), pp. 2-3.

43. This idea is forwarded by Mahmud Qambar, *Dirasat Turathiyah*, 1: 403-405. Certainly when one of the most eminent *Sufis*, Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz in the 9th century C.E. concludes his systematic discourse on *Sufi* experience, *Kitab al-Sidq*, by claiming that he is an insightful and intelligent educator of his times (*inni bi-mu'addibin basirin jahbadhin li-zaman hadha*), he does not mean that he is an educator merely of young students! Al-Jahiz' (d. 869 C.E.), who viewed *adab* as comprehensive education, is right to uphold this broad meaning of *adab* and attempted to resuscitate this basic understanding of *adab* after its meaning had been increasingly restricted; Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz, *Kitab al-Sidq* (The Book of Truthfulness). Edited and translated by A. J. Arberry (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 73; Cf., Tarif Khalidi, *Classical Arab Islam: The Cultural Heritage of the Golden Age* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1985), pp. 56-59.

44. Qambar, *Dirasat Turathiyah*, 1: 245. In 1: 228-232, Qambar also listed the names of scholars and teachers (*mu'addib*) for the children of various influential and wealthy families in Islamic history.

45. Gustav von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam: A Vital Study of Islam at its Zenith*, 2nd edition of 1946 (Chicago: Phoenix Books/The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 251; and George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. 48.

46. Peter Brown, "Late Antiquity and Islam: Parallels and Contrast," in Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977) pp. 23-27. For a comprehensive and profound exposition of the Greek idea, see Werner Jaeger's classic work *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*. English

translation by Gilbert Highet, 3 vols., 2nd edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945).

47. *Risalah*, para. 13, p. 40, and para. 29, pp. 195-106; IS, pp. 69-70.

48. IFOEM, pp. 1-4; IS, pp. 47-50.

49. CEII, p. 25.

50. Al-Attas, *Comments on the Reexamination of al-Raniri's hujjat al-siddiq: A Refutation* (Kuala Lumpur: Museum Department, 1975) pp. 104-106.

51. In *al-An'am* (6): 164, God commanded the Prophet to proclaim: "Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another."

52. *Hūd* (11): 116. See also Fazlur Rahman's explanation on the Qur'an's concept of judgement in history, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), pp. 52-56.

53. J. Douglas Brown, in the concluding paragraph of his book, writes to underline the integral social nature of liberal art education at producing a whole man thus: "...an education aimed at enhancing the understanding of human response, the powers of analysis, judgement, and communication, a sense of history, and intellectual and moral integrity is indeed vocational in the highest sense." *The Liberal University: An Institutional Analysis* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969), p. 237. Similarly Tonsor concurs that "the best kind of citizenship training I know is that education which enables its holder to perform his function in society well". S.Tonsor, *Tradition and Reform in Education* (Virginia: Open Court, 1974) p. 105.

54. *Aims and Objectives*, p. 45. For further discussion on this, see my book, *Educational Philosophy*, chap. v.

55. A. L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Tradition and Modernization into the Arab National Systems* (London: Luzac & Co., 1972), p. 207.

56. *Risalah*, paras. 7-9, pp. 12-27.

57. *Ibid.*, para. 153, pp. 178-180.

58. *Ibid.*, para. 53, pp. 180-183; *Aims and Objectives*, p. 3.

59. *Op. cit.*, para. 55, pp. 186-187.

60. Cited by Muhammad Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazzali*. Reprint of 1962 edition (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970) p. 166.

61. Al-Attas, *The Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993) p. 1.

62. Al-Attas, *Acceptance Speech*, p. 31.

63. For further elaboration on this subject see my article, "Insan Baik Teras Kewarganegaraan", pp. 1-24.

64. On his conception of the university in Islam and his implementation of the idea at ISTAC, see my book, *Educational Philosophy*, chaps. iv and v, Sharifah Shifa al-Attas, writer and compiler, *ISTAC Illuminated: A Pictorial Tour of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)*, Kuala Lumpur (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1998); and on ISTAC learn-

ing culture, see Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Budaya Ilmu: Satu Penjelasan* (Culture of Knowledge: An Elaboration). 2nd Edition (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional, 2003), chap. 7.

Chapter XX

The Moral Philosophy of Islamic Mysticism: A Cursory View of the Ethical Teachings of Futuwwa

Yanis Eshots

Most of the modern European orientalist are prone to regard spiritual phenomena as purely or pre-eminently social ones, therefore they usually associate “futuwwa” with a certain social phenomenon, the rudiments of which, reportedly, can be traced back to the early 10th century, while its institutional form appeared during the reign of the Abbaside caliph Nāsir li-Dīn Allāh (577/1181 – 620/1233). In this social aspect, it is reasonable to regard futuwwa as the younger brother of Sufism, i.e., as an institution, created for those who wanted to achieve a certain degree of self-perfection, but were not ready to tread the steep and thorny path of tasawwuf.

In our view, however, futuwwa, like tasawwuf, is, primarily and essentially, not a social phenomenon but a certain station of the “straight path”, which must be passed by every faithful (mū’min) man in his way to God (which definitely does not rule out the possibility to regard it also and accidentally as a social phenomenon). In this brief paper, I will try to examine the ethical teachings related to this station.

The literal meaning of the word “futuwwa” is “youth”, the word is derived from “fatā” – “a youth”, “a young man”. “Fatā” is the one who is not a “sabī” (a boy) any longer and has not become a “shaykh” (an old man) yet. As a technical term, it designates a person, who has actualized the human perfections and spiritual energies, thus returning his inborn nature (innate disposition or fitra) to its initial purity. (To some extent, the notion of futuwwa can be, perhaps, conveyed by the English word “valour”, in which case “fatā” itself should be rendered into English as “a valiant man”. This, however, would be a very vague and approximate translation.)

Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Āmulī, the author of the encyclopaedic work “Nafāis al-funūn”, writes in the chapter on futuwwa:

... from the point of view of the true meaning, “fatā” is the one who has reached the perfection of his inborn nature and the end of what is his perfection. Consequently, as long as the servant is subject to his caprice (hawā) and [bodily] nature, and the muddy admixtures of the mortal human being (basha) are manifest in it (his nature – Y.E.), he is in the rank of the boy (sabī). When he ascends from this station and his inborn nature becomes free from the adversities and maladies of the soul, and the deficiencies and evil attributes, he reaches the rank of the youth (fatā), because the faculty of the meaning of the human being has reached its perfec-

tion in him, and the virtues have been actually obtained by him as the formal faculties and bodily perfections are [fully] obtained by the youth; and “the young man” (*javānmard*) is called “the master of the heart” (*sāhib-e dil*), because, when the inborn human nature reaches its perfection, it is called “the heart”, therefore [God] said: “Behold, he (Abraham – Y.E.) approached his lord with a sound heart” (37:84)¹; and when he ascends from the station of the heart and, through the manifestations of the Divine Attributes, the attributes of the heart are obliterated from him, and he reaches the station of the spirit (*rūh*) and becomes the master of witnessing (*sāhib-e mushāhada*), he obtains the rank of the old man (*shaykh*), because the *shaykh* is the one whose bodily faculties have become weak, whose blackness (i.e., black hair – Y.E.) has changed to whiteness, and who has approached the [state of] annihilation (*fanā'*), and the master of witnessing has also approached the [state of] annihilation and, through the [illuminations of the] divine lights, the darkness of his attributes has become white and illuminated, and his faculties and attributes, through the [predominance of the] attributes of the Real, have become weak and insignificant. Hence, beginning of *walāya* (“friendship”) is impossible before reaching the end of *futuwwa* (“valour”).²

As we see, *futuwwa* is regarded by the author as a middle station between the stations of the boy and the old man, or those of the novice and the *shaykh*. “*Fatā'*” is the one, who is at the mid-point of the path; hence, *futuwwa* is by no means the ultimate limit of perfection, accessible to the human being. Rather, it is the substratum of Gnosis (*'irfān*) and Sufism (*tasawwuf*). The main objective of the “*fatā'*” is to restore his inborn nature (*fitra*) to its initial purity, before God’s trust (*amāna*) to the human being, is returned to its true owner.

To compare, we shall quote here one more definition of *futuwwa* – the one, given by ‘*Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī* in his “*Tuhfat al-Ikhwān*” (“The Presents of Brethren”):

Know that *futuwwa* consists in the manifestation of the light of the inborn nature and in its subjugating the darkness of the [natural] modalities, so that the totality of man’s virtues is manifested and the deficiencies are removed.³

Like *Shams al-Dīn Āmulī*, ‘*Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī* also speaks of three stations of man’s self-realization, of which *futuwwa* is the middle one:

Consequently, *muruwwa* (“manhood”) is the soundness and purity of the inborn nature and *futuwwa* (“valour”) is its

lustre and luminosity, and, like *muruwwa* is the basis and foundation of *futuwwa*, *futuwwa* [itself] is the basis and foundation of *walāya* (“friendship”).

And *walāya* (“friendship”) is the annihilation of the mortal human nature and submersion in the entity of unity (*ahadiyya*), and the manifestation of the power of love, and purity of his (the mystic’s (?) – Y.E.) substance of the rust of twoness (duality).⁴

Since the true essence of *walāya* (“friendship with God”) and its end is the annihilation of the mystic (“God’s friend”) in God, wherefore the former ceases to enjoy any existence of its own and, instead, exists through the existence of God, acting as His tool, it is evident that the station of *walāya* is, properly speaking, outside the limits of the concern of moral philosophy. After all, it is only possible to speak about morality as far as the man possesses (at least a limited degree of) free will and has a possibility to choose. *Walī* (“God’s friend”) has fully delegated his will and the right to choose to God, therefore his actions cannot any longer be judged in terms of ethics.

Metaphysically, the concepts of good and evil, duty and right, freedom and necessity are nothing but names of the different directions (aspects) of the reality of human nature. This is the station of *futuwwa* in which the restoration of the initial purity of the inborn nature takes place. Hence, the proper region of moral philosophy is the station of *futuwwa*. (H. Corbin was, therefore, quite right when he concluded that, in Islamic thought, “the moral philosophy, together with the highest possible ideal it can suggest, should be sought in the treatises on *futuwwa*”).⁵

Now, the Islamic philosophers and mystics regard the Qur’an and the Tradition (*sunna*) as the basis and main source of all knowledge and wisdom. We shall try to follow their example and look there for sources of the teachings of *futuwwa*.

Two personages in the Qur’an are described as *fatā* (pl. *fitya*). The first is Abraham, in the verse: “They (the people of Abraham’s tribe – Y.E.) said: “We heard a *fatā* (“a youth”) talk of them: he is called Abraham” (21:60)⁶; the second – the companions of the Cave, in the following two verses: 1) “Behold, *al – fityatu* (“the youths”) betook themselves to the Cave: they said: “Our Lord! Bestow on us mercy from Thyself and dispose of our affair for us in the right way!”” (18:10)⁷; 2) “We relate to thee their story in truth: they were *fitya* (“youths”) who believed in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance” (18:13)⁸. Though the literal meaning of the word – “a youth” – is applicable in all cases, it should be noted that both Abraham and the companions of the cave are portrayed in the Qur’an as the true professors of God’s oneness (*muwahhidūn*) and the defendants of God’s case in front of their people, not merely as “young people”, i.e., physically young individuals.

Elsewhere, the Qur’an tells us about the Covenant that was concluded between God and the children of Adam: “When thy Lord drew forth from

the Children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): “Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?” – they said: “Yea, we do testify!” (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgement: “Of this we were never mindful!” (7:172)⁹. Hence, it is evident that the futuwwa of Abraham and the companions of the cave lies, first of all, in their faithfulness to this preeternal agreement – the Covenant of “Alast” (“Alast” meaning “Am I not” in Arabic). “Fatā” is the one who remains faithful to the agreement in every circumstances. Hence, faithfulness (wafā’) is apparently his most important characteristic. It is impossible for him to choose any associates to God, as his tribesmen have done, since, by doing so, he would break his word: “Yea, we do testify!”. This does not in any way contradict the definition of futuwwa which was given above (“the achievement of the perfection of man’s inborn nature), since faithfulness to his Lord constitutes the very essence of the servant. Abraham and the companions of the cave could only remain faithful to their Lord in the given exceptional circumstances due to the purity and perfection of their inborn nature (God’s oneness, therefore, was a thing which was permanently witnessed by them, much in way in which we witness the light and the darkness, the rising and setting of the sun, etc. One who is blind by birth, however, would doubt them easily.)

Among other deeds of Abraham, which characterize him as a fatā, at least two should be mentioned: 1) his establishing the habit of sacrifice by offering to God his son Isaac; 2) his establishing the custom of hospitality (remember the well-known biblical story of his hosting the angels disguised as youths). (The custom of hospitality had – and still has – a tremendous importance not only for the Sufis but for the common Muslims as well as anyone who has visited a Muslim country will agree.)

Turning to the Tradition, we must say there are numerous hadiths and sayings of the Prophet and the Shiah Imams concerning the topic. Perhaps, the most famous is the following one which is quoted in almost all treatises on futuwwa we have consulted:

Once the Prophet (may prayers and peace be upon him!) was sitting with a group (of companions). A man entered the house and said: “O Prophet of God! In a certain house a man and a woman are engaged in a corrupt business”. [The Prophet] said: “They must be questioned and the matter must be investigated”. Several of the companions in his presence asked the permission [to do this] but [the Prophet] did not grant it to anyone. [Then] the commander of the faithful ‘Ali (peace be upon him!) entered the house. [The Prophet] said: “O ‘Ali! Go and see whether this is true or not”. The commander of the faithful ‘Ali went to the house. When he came to the door of the house, he closed his eyes and [then] entered the house, stretching his arms to the wall, [and moved in this way] until he had gone round the house, after which he left

it. When he returned to the Prophet, he said: “O Prophet of God! I went around this house and did not see anyone in it”. The Prophet (may prayers and peace be upon him!) understood [the truth] by the light of the prophethood and said: “O ‘Ali! Thou art the fatā of this community”.¹⁰

In the second of his two treatises on futuwwa (“Futuwwatnameh”), Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Omar Suhrawardi (d.1234 or 1235), the famous Sufi shaykh, the author of the “Awārif al-ma‘ārif” and the founder of the Sufi order of Suhrawardiyya (not to be confounded with his compatriot Shihab al-Din Yahya Suhrawardi (d. 1191), the famous philosopher and the founder of the school of illumination (ishrāq)), gives an even more eloquent account of ‘Ali’s decisive attempts to protect those accused in transgressions and breaking the rules of Shariah:

If someone had stolen, when he was taken to the Commander of the faithful and his theft was established, at first he (Imam ‘Ali – Y.E.) ordered the thief’s hand to be cut off, in accordance with the proof of God’s speech: “As to the thief, male or female, cut off his or her hands: a punishment by way of example, from Allah, for their crime: and Allah is exalted in power” (5:38).¹¹ It is true that the hand must be cut off. [After that,] he said [to the owner of the stolen property]: “Now, do forgive him, give me his sin! The [stolen] thing was not your [true] share, and this wretch was but a captive of the [divine] decree (qadā) and measure (qadar) (i.e., the “fate” – Y.E.). The Devil led him into temptation and made him go astray from the path. I will compensate [for what has gone of] your goods”. And [in such a manner] he interceded [with the owner] [on the thief’s behalf], until he had satisfied him. If a fornicator was taken to him, he did not accept the accusation until he had not questioned four impartial witnesses, and, although they bore witness, he [still] did not accept [the charge] and asked the witnesses to pay one tenth of their property [as an alms tax to the needy] – and, of course, he tried to prevent the establishment of the sin of the fornicator, and summoned the witnesses repeatedly, and admonished and threatened them, and if he was compelled [by the testimonies], he ordered the fornicator to be punished and reproached the witnesses, and [after that] did not accept the testimonies of these people, [saying]: “They testified to fornication”.¹²

Hence, the most manifest aspect of the futuwwa of ‘Ali apparently consists in his covering the other people’s sins and sheltering the sinners or – what is perhaps more precise – in his not paying attention to, and being

heedless of, other people's slips and lapses. Now "sattār" ("the coverer" or "the curtailer") is one of the names of God, so there is a good reason to say that in his actions 'Ali was inspired by God and became the locus of manifestation of this particular name. Of course, "sattār" points to a more general name of God (actually, the most important one in respect to the created world) – "rahmān" ("the merciful"): the covering of the sins of the others is nothing but a kind of mercy.

It is interesting that 'Ali himself does not mention covering of sins (Arab. "satr"; Pers. "aybpushī") among the main characteristics of the fatā. One can speculate why. Perhaps because the covering of one's own good deeds is not less important than the covering of the sins of the others – or just because the necessity of the presence of this characteristic seemed too obvious to be mentioned.

Reportedly, 'Ali has said: "The root of futuwwa is faithfulness (wafā'), truthfulness (sidq), trustworthiness (amn), generosity (sakhā'), humility (tawādu'), sincere counselling (nasīha), guidance along the right path (hidāya) and repentance (or rather: conversion – Y.E.) (tawba); no one merits futuwwa except [the person] who possesses these traits".¹³ Since faithfulness (wafā') is mentioned first, it apparently is the most important characteristic of the fatā in the eyes of 'Ali, though it is fully actualized only after the obtaining of all other qualities. 'Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī writes in his "Tuhfat al-ikhwān":

Faithfulness is the last step of futuwwa and the furthest limit of the perfection of the faculty of the inborn nature (fitra), because futuwwa is impossible [to obtain] otherwise than through the purity of the inborn nature and the purification of the soul from the dirt of the nature. And the inborn nature is not cleansed from the darkness of the natural disposition (jibilla) and does not become pure from the filth of the nature until the servant does not show faithfulness to the ancient covenant; when the faithfulness is shown, the purity becomes perfect.

... as long as some of the perfections of the human being and spiritual virtues, which are required by the inborn nature in compliance with the purity of the first preparedness, remain potential in the second purity and are not actualized [in it], the servants have not shown faithfulness to the covenant of divinity (ulūhiyya), the vow of which has been taken from them, and have not [fully] paid the dues of lordship, the payment of which is incumbent upon them.¹⁴

As we see, the faithfulness to the vow (which is alluded to in the afore quoted verse of the Qur'an: "Am I not your Lord?" – "Yea, we do testify!") is understood by the author as the restoration of the initial purity of the inborn

nature (or obtaining “the second purity”, if you like). This restoration, being itself an affair of faith, constitutes the basis and fundament of the ethics of futuwwa, since fata’s relationship with God is the basis of his relationship with what is “other than God”. Again, the secret of the uniqueness of man’s inborn nature lies in his unique capacity to know God’s Essence through the knowledge of the Names and to profess and truly understand His oneness (which is the oneness by reality). As Kāshānī writes,

the preceding covenant consists in the Real’s (may He be exalted!) creation (“innovation”) (ibdā‘) of the faculty of the knowledge [of God] and the profession of His oneness in the essence of the inborn nature of the human being and [in His putting] the remembrance (dhikr) of the intellectual proofs [of His oneness] in his innate character, and in the human being’s receipt (= acceptance) of this inborn nature, while the subsequent agreement [lies in] the assent of faith (tasdiq īmānī) of God’s divinity and oneness and in the observance of the laws of submission (sharā‘ī islāmī) through the fulfillment of the obligations of servanthood and the payment of the dues of lordship.¹⁵

There are two kinds of faithfulness: faithfulness to God and faithfulness to creation (the former being the essential faithfulness and the latter – the faithfulness “by following”, i.e., the latter being the concomitant of the former). What we have spoken about thus far is the faithfulness to God (i.e., the faithfulness which is manifested through the properties (= rulings) (ahkām) of the agreements of faith). As for the faithfulness to creation, it consists in “gripping the firm rope of love and holding fast the strong bond of attachment (mawadda), which was bound in compliance with the ruling of spiritual interrelation and pre-eternal union in the origin of the inborn nature”.¹⁶ This latter faithfulness should be understood as showing solicitude (‘ināya) for the necessities of the rulings (= properties) of love and brotherhood and observing the rights of friendship and companionship – which, in turn, is manifested as the quality of “īthār”, i.e., giving preference to the benefit of the other over one’s own advantage. This sort of preference is considered to be the highest degree of generosity – that, by showing which the benefactor puts his own life into peril (e.g., by giving the last mouthful of water to a companion while travelling across the desert, with no sight of water nearby).

In the Qur’an, we find the expression “yuwthirūna ‘alā an-fusihim” (“give (them) preference over themselves”):

But those (i.e., the ansār, the faithful of Medina – Y.E.) who, before them (the muhājirūn, i.e., the emigrants from Mecca – Y.E.), had homes (in Medina) and had adopted the Faith, show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to

the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls – they are the ones that achieve prosperity (59:9).¹⁷

Hence, one can conclude that such preference is the habit of those truly faithful which was established in the very beginnings of Islam, one of the basic ethical principles of the early Muslim community.

This is as well the trait for which the early Sufis were famous. One will recollect the story about Nūrī (d. 295/907 or 908). Along with a number of other Sufis, he was denounced for being a heretic and sentenced to death. When he and his companions were taken to the place of execution, the executioner wanted to execute Nūrī's fellow Sufi Raqqām first, but Nūrī took his place and asked to execute him instead of Raqqām, because, as he put it, since his path (tarīqa) was based on (giving) preference (ithār) [to the benefit of the other over that of his own] and life was the dearest thing [to him], he wanted to sacrifice the few remaining moments of it for the sake of his brothers.¹⁸

There are three chapters concerning futuwwa in Ibn al-ʿArabī's magnum opus "Al-futūhāt al-makkiyya" ("The Meccan Openings") (chapters 42, 146 and 147). His approach, in general, is highly speculative, as is almost always the case with him. In brief, to Ibn al-ʿArabī, fatā is a man who knows the measure (qadar) of the things and gives to each of them its proper share. Interestingly, of all the aforementioned characteristics of the fatā, he seems to give the utmost importance to ithār, i.e., "(giving) preference". Thus, in the opening verses of the chapter 146 ("On the knowledge of the station of futuwwa and its mysteries"), he states: "Fatā is the one whose adornment is ithār".¹⁹

However, he understands ithār as an ontological rather than an ethical category, i.e., as God's giving existence (wujūd) to "what is other than God":

... and He (may He be exalted!) is absolutely independent (ghanī); and whoever possesses such independence and then gives existence (awjada) to the world, does not give existence to it because of his need in it, and, indeed, He gives existence to the world for the sake of the world, giving preference to it over His uniqueness (infirād) in existence (i.e., His being the sole possessor of existence, and this is the very entity of futuwwa.²⁰

Hence, whoever, through his aspiration (himma) gives existence to – either outer natural or inner imaginal – forms, is also a fatā, because he apparently gives preference to [giving existence to] these forms over his uniqueness in existence (i.e., his being the sole possessor of a certain kind of existence). I am afraid, however, that, if we follow this trend, there remains little (if any) space for the lofty ethical teachings of the early Sufis – in fact, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought they are substituted with ontological speculation

as (practical) deed is replaced by him with theoretical inquiry and practical Sufism (tasawwuf) of khānqāh is transformed into the theoretical mysticism (‘irfān-e nazarī) of the madrasa. Ibn al-‘Arabī also points out that what is commonly known as “īthār”, is actually the preference of the right of one “other” over that of another (“other”, *ghayr*), i.e., **we are usually unable to distinguish between what is truly ours and what belongs to the other and mistake the latter for the former; hence, what outwardly seems to be futuwwa, in reality, quite often has nothing to do with it.**

To reach the station of futuwwa, Ibn al-‘Arabī tells us, we must leave the station of futuwwa; to gain futuwwa, we must forsake it. True futuwwa consists in renouncing our claims to it and delegating it to God, i.e., in giving preference to the Real over the creation.

The renouncing of futuwwa [consists in] [giving] preference
to our Creator [over ourselves],
And this is [also] [the reality of] futuwwa if thou hast realized
its meaning.²¹

In practical terms, Ibn al-‘Arabī then explains, this renouncing implies the preference of the Divine Law, sent to us by God through the mediation of His Prophet, over the caprice of our soul as well as over the proofs, presented by our intellect and the rulings of our thought and (theoretical) vision if they contradict the Law. Hence, the fatā is the one who is “between the hands of the science of the [Divine] Law as the dead one is between the hands of the washer of corpses”,²² i.e. the one who fully obeys the Law. Now, the obedience to the Shariah is, of course, nothing else than “Islām”, i.e., “submission” (to God’s will). The Prophet defined this submission as “to bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His messenger, to perform the daily prayers, to pay the alms tax, to fast during Ramadan, and to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca if you can find the means to do so”.²³ Is, then, every muslim a fatā? Does the performance of the aforementioned action invest us with futuwwa (as Ibn al-‘Arabī seems to hold)? Not necessarily, we think, because the level of Islām (“(outer) submission”) is the level of action (fī‘l) while what futuwwa essentially requires, is the possession of certain inner qualities and characteristics, the actions being only the manifestations (or “self-disclosures”) of these qualities. In other words, futuwwa essentially involves *īmān* (faith) while it deals with *islām* (submission) “by following” (bi-l-taba‘iyya).

Now, “īmān” is a derivative from “amn” (“security”); hence, the literal meaning of the former is “giving security”. God says in the Qur’an: “Those who believe (āmanū) and do not make obscure their faith (īmān) with injustice, are those who have security (amn), and they are rightly guided” (6:82).²⁴ In turn, the companions of the cave (of whom we spoke earlier) are described in the Qur’an as the *fitya* (“youths” or “valiant men”) who believe in their Lord: “We relate to their story in truth: they were *fitya* who believed (āmanū) in their Lord, and We advanced them in guidance” (18:13).²⁵ If we

admit that the meaning of “valiant men” is applicable in this case to the word “fitya” (as it certainly should, because, since the Qur’an is the speech of God, it always has more than one – the outward and literal – meaning), the interrelation between futuwwa (valour) and īmān (faith) becomes evident: whoever is truly mū’min (i.e., faithful), is a fatā (a valiant man), because faith implies reliance and trust from both sides (the Lord and His servant), as well as faithfulness to the given promise, loyalty and sincerity. Hence, futuwwa is always present in īmān and vice versa, therefore, as H. Corbin observed, “the integral faith (īmān), in the Shiite sense of the word, is often itself designated as futuwwa”.²⁶

From this point of view, all virtues appear to be nothing else than concomitants (lawāzīm) of faith (īmān) which is understood as faithfulness (wafā’) to the pre-eternal covenant between man and God. This faithfulness consists in the restoration of the initial purity of man’s inborn nature (fitra) through the actualization of his hidden perfection and spiritual energies. To open the way to this purification and ensure its success, God and man conclude the second agreement, which consists in the assent of faith to God’s divinity and oneness and in the observance of the Law (Shariah) of submission. In this this-worldly modality the faithfulness to the first agreement is only possible through the faithfulness to the second one. The faithfulness to God makes the fatā faithful to creation, i.e., to the people, whom he regards as the companions of the pre-eternal vow. Hence, he feels solidarity with them as parts of one body feel solidarity with each other.

Of course, the station of futuwwa is not the end of the path of mystics and wayfarers. As we indicated earlier; it is followed by (the station of) walāya (friendship with God) and annihilation in Him. Without reaching the station of futuwwa and becoming the fatā, however, it is impossible to become the true friend, the lover and the beloved of God. Without faithfulness, there is no love.

Let me conclude with the words of Hāfiz:

Except my heart who is His lover from the pre-eternity until post-eternity,

I have never heard of anyone remaining [faithful] in the affair.²⁷

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NOTES

1. “The Holy Qur’an”, translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, (London: Wordsworth Editions 2000), p. 377.

2. Shams al-Dīn Muhammad Āmulī, “Risāleye futuwwatiyya az “Nafāis al-funūn”” in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, edited and with prolegomena by Morteza Sharrāf, French introduction by H. Corbin, 2nd edition, Tehran: Shirkat-e Enteshārāt-e Mu‘īn 1370/1991, p. 60-61.

3. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, “Tuhfat al-ikhwān fī khasā’īs al-fityān”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 4.
4. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, “Tuhfat al-ikhwān fī khasā’īs al-fityān”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 5-6.
5. “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 8 (of H. Corbin’s French introduction).
6. “The Holy Qur’an”, p. 267.
7. “The Holy Qur’an”, p. 235.
8. “The Holy Qur’an”, p. 236.
9. “The Holy Qur’an”, p. 132.
10. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, “Tuhfat al-ikhwān fī khasā’īs al-fityān”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 12.
11. “The Holy Qur’an”, p. 86.
12. Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Omar Suhrawardī, “Futuwwat – name-ye digarī”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 107-108.
13. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, “Tuhfat al-ikhwān fī khasā’īs al-fityān”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 40.
14. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, “Tuhfat al-ikhwān fī khasā’īs al-fityān”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 39.
15. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, “Tuhfat al-ikhwān fī khasā’īs al-fityān”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 40.
16. ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kashānī, “Tuhfat al-ikhwān fī khasā’īs al-fityān”, in “Risāil-e javānmardān”, p. 40.
17. “The Holy Qur’an”, p. 477.
18. See: ‘Alī ben Uthman al-Jullābā al-Hujwīrī, “Kashf al-mahjūb”, ed. by W.Zhukovski (Leningrad: 1926), p. 237. **Nūrī then explains why he prefers this world to the hereafter: the former, he says, is the abode of service (khidma) while the latter is the dwelling place of nearness, and nearness cannot be gained in any other way except through service.**
19. Ibn al-‘Arabī, “Al-futūhat al-makkiyya” (Beirūt: Dār Sādir), part 2, p. 231.
20. Ibn al-‘Arabī, “Al-futūhat al-makkiyya” (Beirūt: Dār Sādir), part 2, p. 232.
21. Ibn al-‘Arabī, “Al-futūhat al-makkiyya”, Beirūt: Dār Sādir, part 2, p. 234.
22. Ibn al-‘Arabī, “Al-futūhat al-makkiyya”, Beirūt: Dār Sādir, part 2, p. 233.
23. The English translation of the hadīth is by W.C. Chittick, “Sufism: A Short Introduction” (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), p. 4.
24. “Al-Qur’an al-Karīm”, *Qazan: the typography of Dombrovski, 1907*, part 1, p. 250. The English translation is ours.
25. “The Holy Qur’an”, p. 236.
26. H. Corbin, “En islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques”, 2^e edition, Paris: Gallimard, 1991, t. IV, p. 412.
27. Hāfiz-e Shīrāzī, “Dīwān”, Tehran 1375 H.S., p. 189.

Chapter XXI

Dualism and Monism: How Really Different Are the Two Versions of Sufi Ethics?

Andrey Smirnov

‘Good’ and ‘evil’ are often regarded as the most general, and at the same time universal categories that shape human moralities and ethical theories. Islamic ethics is no exception. The Quran uses the concepts of *khayr* (good) and *sharr* (evil) to denote what the world as a whole with its various parts and events taking place in it can bring to the human being. ‘Good’ and ‘evil’ as philosophical categories were elaborated in Mu‘tazilism and later in Sufism along the lines generally adopted in Islamic ethics. As for the *falāsifa*, they were largely dependant on the Aristotelian and, even more, the Neoplatonic view on good and evil.

Although the Mu‘tazila and the Ṣūfī proceed from the intuitions of the Quran, their theories differ from it at least in one respect. Quran regards good and evil as relative categories. **Something** is evil not because it participates in an evil principle, but because its ‘bad’ effects are overweighing the ‘good’ ones. Fiqh adopts the same basis for prohibiting and sanctioning, and therefore the prohibited may easily be, not only sanctioned *ad hoc*, but even prescribed as obligatory if its ‘good’ effect prevails over the ‘evil’ one in a given situation. As for the Mu‘tazila, they strive to treat good and evil as non-relative categories, claiming at the same time that the outcome and the meaning of the Divine actions is only ‘good’ and never ‘evil,’ e.g., they argue that the punishment of sinners is not an ‘evil’ for them but a manifestation of God’s ‘concern’ about their fate resulting out of His ‘benevolence.’

Sufism can be treated as an interpreter of this Islamic legacy, as it proceeds along the line of non-relative philosophical approaches to the good and evil. The ethical theories of Rūmī and Ibn ‘Arabī, the two prominent Ṣūfī thinkers, appear at the first glance to be opposite. They seemingly may be qualified as ‘ethical dualism’ on the part of Rūmī (he accepts the dichotomy of good and evil which are sharply distinct and immiscible principles) vs. ‘ethical monism’ on the part of Ibn ‘Arabī (whose basic assumption resulting out

of his ontologism is ‘all is good’). This qualification seems to be confirmed by these authors’ elaboration of traditional ethical topics like love (*‘ishq*) and beloved (*ma ‘shūq*), temptation (*fitna*), thankfulness (*shukr*), patience (*sabr*) and complaint (*shakwa*), autonomy of human will (*ikhtiyār*) and action (*fi‘l*), attitude towards other religions.

However, I will argue that this opposition is not as sharp as it might appear after the comparison of the relevant texts. The epistemological theory which Ibn ‘Arabī calls ‘perplexity’ (*hayra*) treats the truth as an entwining of the two opposites that would ordinarily be considered mutually exclusive. Therefore his ethical monism does not rule out dualism, but on the contrary presupposes it according to the strategy of the ‘perplexed’ (*hā‘ir*) reasoning. Rūmī moves from the other end, as his dualistic theses develop into discourse which leads him to what at least logically is compatible with ethical monism.

M.Fakhry, a well-known scholar of Islamic ethics, in his fundamental study ‘Ethical Theories in Islam’ points to the scarcity of ethical thought in Islamic philosophy. There is a good reason to agree with him, but only as far as *falsafa* (which is the chief object of M.Fakhry’s attention), as well as the *Ismā‘īlī* and, to some extent, the *Ishrāqī* thought (which remained outside the scope of his book) are concerned. Those schools of Islamic philosophy followed mainly Greek thought, which means in this case chiefly Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ways of understanding good and evil, and developed their ethics along these lines. But as far as philosophical Kalām and Ṭasawwuf are concerned, this statement does not appear valid.

I will consider the basics of the ethical thought of the two prominent *Sūfī* thinkers, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273) and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī (1165-1240), in the general context of Islamic approach to the concepts of good and evil. While doing so, I will distinguish between the religious and the philosophical treatments of the topic as ‘relative’ and ‘absolute’ understandings of these categories.

Islamic ethics appears to be no exception from the well-known assumption that ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are basic and universal moral ideas. It is rather obvious that the concept of ‘good’ (*khayr*) is one of the chief Quranic notions. The frequency of its occurrence, among other things, testifies to that. The term *khayr* (‘good’) appears in the Quran 176 times, not to speak about its derivatives. The term *sharr* (‘evil’) is by far less frequent, occurring only 31 time throughout the Quranic text. Though in a very simplified form, these facts reflect the generally ‘optimistic’ approach of Islam to basic ethical issues. Of course, *khayr* and *sharr* are not the only terms that denote the concepts of good and evil, although they are expressive enough in the context of the present discussion.

In the Quran and the Sunna good and evil are treated as relative rather than absolute concepts. This means that if the Sharī‘a prohibits some things, it does so not because those things participate in a certain evil principle, but because the good that results out of those things is by far and without doubt outbalanced by the evil they bring. Such is, for example, the gambling which, though bringing delight to the human soul (which is a certain good), results in an evil that beyond doubt outweighs this benefit, since the gambler is likely to lose his part of the camel and starve together with his family. What is more important and even worse in its effects is the fact that gambling absorbs the man totally and leaves no place in his soul for true faith and affection. The same applies to perhaps the most important thing in religious ethics. People are persuaded to adopt the true faith because Islam will certainly bring good to its followers both in this life and in the hereafter, whereas other faiths might bring some benefits to their adherents on the earth but will inevitably cause evil after death (which is a settled fact at least in the case of *mushrikūn*). The balance of good and evil is quite obvious and is supposed to motivate the human behavior.

The attitude adopted in *fiqh* is basically the same. The ‘five categories’ (*al-ahkām al-khamsa*) classify human deeds as good or evil after sorting out the *mubāh* actions (those that leave the Lawgiver indifferent). The juridical aspect is thus added to the ethical evaluation of human actions. It seems important that this ethical aspect is not forced out by the juridical one in the reasoning of the *fuqahā*’ or overshadowed by it. The most ‘radical’ evaluation is expressed by the *wājib-maḥzūr* (‘obligatory’-‘interdicted’) pair of categories, whereas the non-mandatory prohibitions and prescriptions fall into the *sunna-makrūh* class of opposites. However, even the most ‘extreme’ of these categories do not express the absolute and unchangeable evaluations of the thing, as they can easily be reversed with the change of context which reverses the balance of good and evil. *Khamr* (alcohol) is a well-known example of this. Its consumption is prohibited absolutely (*maḥzūr*) in ordinary contexts because of the evil resulting from its usage. But if a Muslim is choking and might die, and has no other liquid to drink, he/she not only may but is obliged to save his/her life by drinking some alcohol. Thus the usage of *khamr* in a given situation becomes not just permitted, but ‘obligatory’ (*wājib*).

Philosophy puts aside this strategy of relative and context-dependant evaluation. Instead, it adopts the absolute standpoint which results out of the basic philosophical attitude which the Western tradition usually calls ‘the critical spirit.’ The philosopher would not agree to take something external and not belonging to the thing under consideration as the ground for its qualification. The basis and the foundation of all the thing’s qualities needs to be discovered inside, not outside, the thing.

The Mu‘tazila were the first Islamic thinkers to make an attempt at building up such an ‘absolute’ ethical evaluation. Among the many topics addressed by the early Mutakallimūn I will speak about the two which seem important for our present purposes.

The first is the qualification of Divine acts. On very rare occasions did the Mu‘tazila agree among themselves, and this question was one of those. As al-Ash‘arī relates, in fact all shared the opinion that the evil created by God is only called ‘evil’ metaphorically (*majāz*), it is not evil in its reality (*ḥaqīqa*). In the light of the semiotic theory of *ma‘nā* (literally ‘sense’) and its indication (*dalāla*), which was already developed in early Islamic philosophical and philological thought, this thesis means the following. Any act of God and all the things created by Him have only ‘good’ as their *ma‘nā* (‘sense’) as long as the ‘proper’, or the ‘true’ indication (*ḥaqīqa*) is concerned. But the Quran speaks about the ‘evil’ brought to the unbelievers by God’s acts, e.g., calamities in this life and punishment in the hereafter. However, the Mu‘tazila argue that ‘evil’ is not the proper sense indicated by these Divine actions. ‘Evil’ is the proper sense of some other things, the place of which the Divine acts occupy in such cases and therefore indicate ‘evil’ as their metaphorical sense. In a similar way the Mu‘tazila solved the problem of unbelievers’ damnation (*la‘na*) by God. According to them, it is not evil but ‘justice’ (*‘adl*), wisdom, good and appropriate (*salāh*) for the unbelievers’ (*Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn*, Wiesbaden 1980, p.249).

Secondly, it is the question of whether the act prescribed by the Shaṛī‘a is a ‘good act’ (*ḥasana*) by itself or by virtue of God’s commandment, and, accordingly whether the forbidden act is a ‘bad act’ (*sayyi‘a*) by itself or because of the Divine prohibition. The Mu‘tazila were doing their best to reach a rational explanation of the questions asked. Following the same line and proceeding from their assumption that the things have their own nature not overwhelmed in certain cases even by the Divine will, some of them agreed on the following. What the God could never prescribe as obligatory and what He could never prohibit, is ‘good’ and ‘evil’ by itself. As for the commandments which could have been given in an opposite way to that found in the Shaṛī‘a, they are good or evil only because the God commanded so and have no good or evil quality in themselves.

Thus the early Mutakallimūn declared the absolutely good character of the Divine acts and grounded the Divine Law in universal ethics, drawing a distinction between the ethically justified commandments and those given arbitrarily.

Falāsifa, the *Ismā‘īlī* and the early *Ishrāqī* thinkers can hardly be said to be inventive in the sphere of ethics. In philosophy *per se* they followed mainly the Neoplatonic paradigm in treating the problem of good and evil and stuck to the Aristotelian and Platonic models in their books on temperaments and their improvement (numerous *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq* treatises which would baffle even the most patient of readers by their endlessly varying classifications of the soul’s faculties), or simply reproduced the Greek prototypes adding little new (e.g., *Risāla fī māhiyyat al-‘adl* ‘Treatise on the Essence of Justice’ by Miskawayh). All this could hardly help in settling the ethical issues that faced the Muslim society.

Now let us consider the foundations of ethical thought of the two prominent *Šūfī* thinkers, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī.

At first glance, they appear to be incompatible, if not contradictory. Let us first speak about them in general, and then get down to the details and concrete examples.

What Rūmī says could be put down as follows. Good and evil are two opposites that never meet. The goal of the human being is to distinguish one from the other, to set them apart and never mix them up. Those two notions are the instrument of universal ethical categorisation: any human deed is classified as either good or evil, and the human goal is to stay as far from evil and as close to good as possible.

Taken in that generalised form, the ethical basics of Rūmī's thought appear only too familiar to anyone brought up in Christian or Judaic milieu. And perhaps this is no incident, if we take into account the fact that ancient Persian thought had beyond doubt influenced the Persian Muslim thinkers, poets and philosophers alike. The sharply drawn distinction between good and evil as the two principles of the universe is the basic feature of this ancient Persian legacy. The claim that some contemporary authors make saying that Zoroastrianism could have influenced Jewish thought and could have given rise to Jewish ethics is not quite without ground. If this is true to at least some extent, then this similarity of basic ethics that we find in Rūmī's writing and in those of the Christian and Jewish authors would seem less surprising.

As for Ibn 'Arabī, his position looks strikingly different from what Rūmī puts down as an indubitable principle. Al-Shaykh al-akbar argues that nothing is evil 'as such' (*bi al-'ayn*), and that every thing in the universe should rather be evaluated positively, as good. If so, what is the reason for the prescriptions and prohibitions of the Divine law? Rūmī is quite definite on that point, as he sets the good aside from the evil and says that 'the Supreme God... is pleased only by the good' (*Kitāb fī-hī mā fī-hī*, Tehran 1330, p.179). Ibn 'Arabī holds that everything in the world belongs to the domain of existence (*wujūd*), and since the existence belongs only to God (the theory which was to be called later *wahdat al-wujūd* 'unity of existence'), any thing is by virtue of that fact good in itself and never evil. If so, why should anything at all be prohibited? Many scholars of Ibn 'Arabī's thought find parallels for his ideas in Neoplatonic writings. To do justice to the Greatest Shaykh, I would say that at least in that issue he does not follow the Neoplatonic trend of thought and does not adopt the idea of evil as the 'lack' of existence. This idea identifying the material with the bad was readily available at Islamic intellectual market, and al-Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā are among those who made good use of it. But Ibn 'Arabī insists that this is not the case, and that any of the least admired things in the world, e.g., garlic, is only good when considered in itself. Why then did the Prophet detest it? He disliked not the garlic 'as such,' Ibn 'Arabī insists, but its smell (*rā'iha*) (*Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Beirut 1980, p.221). This is so because the thing as such ('*ayn*') can never be qualified as 'disliked' (*makrūh*), only its outward and relative effects can be treated that way.

This 'ontologism' of Ibn 'Arabī leads him to conclusions that would seem rather bizarre when introduced without the philosophical reasoning that stands behind them. Perhaps the most striking for the 'ordinary' Muslim men-

tality is the claim that *no* religion is wrong, and that *every* worshipper worships *only* the One and the True God. This is rather uncommon even as pure theory. However, Ibn ‘Arabī does not stop at this point but draws the logically inevitable conclusion saying that those who tried to make people abandon their ‘wrong’ faiths, were thus preventing them from worshipping the God and therefore were acting in fact against His will. Even the odious Pharaoh of the Quran appears in *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* as the server of God, and following the argumentation of the Greatest Shaykh we cannot but agree with his logically consistent reasoning as long as we accept his basic ontological position which is qualified as *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s latitude in religion stands in sharp contrast to Rūmī’s position. Treating the question of the true faith, Rūmī is quite definite in drawing a distinctive line between Islam and all other religions. He does not hesitate to criticize not only pagan beliefs or actions of the adversaries of Islam, but Christianity as well (*Fī-hī*, p.124-125), proceeding from rather orthodox reasons quite ‘evident’ for anyone (e.g., Rūmī wonders how a humble creature like ‘Īsā can hold the seven heavens with all their weight, taking this argument quite literally). Addressing the issue of love (*‘ishq*), Rūmī feels little doubt that there is ‘the real beloved’ (*ma ‘shūq ḥaqīqī*) to be set apart from other objects of love that do not comply with that criteria (*Fī-hī*, p.160). It is not difficult to see how distinct this position is from that of Ibn ‘Arabī when he says that God is not contained by any direction (*ayn*, literally ‘where’) but is to be found everywhere, and that the human being is to discover Him always, not only when facing the *qibla* (*Fuṣūṣ*, p.80, 114 and other), or when he insists that any temptation (*fitna*) can easily be overcome not by turning away from the ‘wrong’ object of affection but by making it the ‘real’ one through seeing it as a manifestation of God (*al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, Beirut, vol.4, p.453-456).

Ibn ‘Arabī’s position is quite consistent with his basic assumption that the Reality is one and that it is impossible to go beyond it in any of our actions. As for Rūmī, he also hardly doubts that the human being is more than just a creature under God’s command, and warns us against underestimating our real value. In *Fī-hī* he compares the man to pure gold and says that it would be a folly to make a turnip pot out of it. The precious jewel of the human spirit is for Rūmī, not unlike Ibn ‘Arabī, the image of God. In sum, Rūmī is not an adversary of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *waḥdat al-wujūd* theory. If so, why do the ethics of the two thinkers appear so different? Rūmī proceeds from the dualism of good and evil which never come together, while Ibn ‘Arabī’s position is rather an ethical monism. There should be little doubt that the Persian cultural legacy left its trace in Rūmī’s thought, whereas it could hardly have influenced Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory. Is the difference between the two thinkers explained by the diversity of their cultural background? Or perhaps there is much more similarity between their views than appears at first glance due to their common ontological premises?

To answer this question, let us take a closer look at how Rūmī explains the relation between the existence of good and evil and the fact that God is pleased only by the good.

Addressing this topic, Rūmī introduces the notion of Divine will (*irāda*). Unlike the Mu‘tazila, he does not hesitate to say that God wills both good and evil (*Fī-hī*, p.179), which is meant to say that God creates them. However, what is the evil (*sharr*) of which Rūmī is speaking? On the one hand, it is the real, not the metaphorical evil that he has in mind. In this point Rūmī differs from the Mu‘tazila with their tendency to treat every evil brought by acts of God to the human being as *majāz* (metaphor), not the reality. On the other hand, this evil, since it is evil really (*haqīqatan*), not metaphorically, is evil ‘as such’ (*bi al-‘ayn*). This standpoint becomes quite evident when Rūmī says: ‘The willing of evil (*sharr*) would have been bad (*qabīh*) if He willed it for its sake (*li-‘ayni-hi*)’ (*Fī-hī*, p.180), which would be impossible if the evil had not been evil by itself (*bi al-‘ayn*). This means that Rūmī does not take advantage of Ibn ‘Arabī’s way of saying that everything is exclusively good as such but is either good or evil according to human tastes, affections and dislikes, in short, that everything is good or evil only ‘as established’ (*bi al-waḍ‘*), that is, relatively, not absolutely and not substantially.

Rūmī goes a different way. He says that evil is willed not for its own sake, but rather for the sake of good. This thesis is coupled with another one: no good can be brought to the human being in this world if that human being was not suffering from some evil. As a teacher is willing for the ignorance of his pupils because otherwise he is unable to instruct them, as a baker is willing for the hunger of his customers to feed them, as a doctor is willing for the illness of his patients to cure them, -- in the same way God is willing for evil in the world to bring good to His people (*Fī-hī*, p.179). Rūmī even addresses the topic of ruler and his subordinates, which is the closest analogy of the God-to-man relation, and says that rulers are willing for disobedience and even for attacks of the enemies to manifest their power and authority, though they are not pleased by them.

Taking these two theses together, we discover that, according to Rūmī, it is impossible to will the good without willing the evil, although the evil is willed only for the sake of the good and never for itself. Rūmī is quite definite on that point as he stresses: ‘The adversary says [that God] wills evil in no aspect. But it is impossible to will the thing and not to will all its concomitants (*lawāzim*)’ (*Fī-hī*, p.179).

This adds a new and very important dimension to the otherwise sharp distinction between good and evil drawn by Rūmī, since it means that it is impossible to establish the exclusive goodness and to rule out the evil, at least in this world, and that evil and good are by their very nature so closely intertwined that they do not come without each other. Now Rūmī’s position appears much closer to Ibn ‘Arabī’s monism, and especially to his strategy of the ‘perplexed’ (*hā’ir*) reasoning which shifts from one of the opposites to the other without ever making a stop and treats each as a prerequisite for the other and its concomitant.

To make the last but very important step in this short research, we must return to the mainstream of our discussion to answer the following question: how, according to Rūmī, is evil, the prerequisite of good, exemplified in the case of direct God-to-man ethical (not ontological) relation, which is the case of the Divine law, its prescriptions and prohibitions?

In the examples discussed above (the baker, the teacher, etc.), evil as the necessary condition for good is represented by a certain state of the object of benevolence: hunger of those to be fed, ignorance of those to be instructed. Something very similar is to be found in the human being as such, when treated in general in his relation to God. Such is the unwillingness of man to follow the path of good and his inclination to choose evil. For that, and only for that reason was the Law given to people. In his well-known argument Rūmī says that no one calls 'Do not eat the stones!' a prohibition, and no one calls 'Eat the viands!' addressed to a hungry man a prescription, although those phrases are, grammatically speaking, prohibition (*nahy*) and prescription ('*amr*'). They are not called so for the reason that no obstacle stays in their way, because a human being would naturally and without hesitation behave that way. However, man is endowed with the soul which commands him to do evil things (*nafs 'ammāra bi al-sū'*) (Quran 12:53), and it is this evil soul that the God wills and that He creates for the man in order to pour His benefits on him and lead him towards the good. This means that the human spirit is a place where the two kinds of orders, those of his own soul prone to evil and those coming from God Himself, meet to come in conflict. Thus the human being in Rūmī's thought is endowed with a chance to choose freely between the two opposite commandments, those of God and of his own soul, and to proceed in either of the two directions presented to him as options. As for Ibn 'Arabī, he assumes as well that the human being is endowed with ability to choose whether to obey the Divine law or not. But whatever he chooses, he anyway obeys the God's commandment, though not the one which takes the form of the Law ('*amr taklīfī*') but the one which is called 'the creative commandment' ('*amr takwīnī*'). The first is not immediate and therefore might be disobeyed, whereas the second is direct and its fulfillment can never be avoided (*Fuṣūṣ*, pp. 165, 97-98, 115-116).

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Chapter XXII

The Koran on Spiritual Pluralism

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The Koranic unitarian intention entails a universalist vision of the world. This universal ideal allows interpretation in an exclusivistic and expansionistic spirit (and historically, it was often so interpreted). At the same time, the Holy Book of Muslims contains numerous precepts implying that universalism takes pluralism for granted, rather than excludes it.

The Koran shares with the Bible the idea about the metaphysical equality of all human beings as created by one God to serve Him. Along with the Bible, the Koran cultivates the ethnic unity of mankind by regarding Adam as common progenitor of the human race. Like the Gospels, the Koran does not confine divine love to one nation alone but opens the gates to spiritual perfection and eternal salvation to all peoples.

The universalistic understanding of divine guidance has been developed by the Koran in all respects. First and foremost, it preaches devotion to all spiritual missions delivered to people by God's former messengers. The ayat 2:136 inspires the Muslims to say:

We believe in God and the revelation given to us,
And to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes,
And that given to Moses and Jesus,
And that given to all Prophets from their Lord:
We make no difference between one and another of them...

On a par with the followers of Islam, believers in other religions can also hope for eternal salvation:

Those who believe in the Quran,
The Jewish, the Sabians (Unitarians) and the Christians, -
Any who believe in God and the Last Day,
And who performs good deeds, -
On them shall be no fear,
Nor shall they grieve. (5:69)

However, the Koran acknowledges not only the prophets known to the Semitic religions--Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the ayat 40:78 God reveals to the Prophet Muhammad:

Verily We have sent messengers before you.
About some of them We told you,
And about some We have not told you.

The above and other ayats in the Koran underline the idea of God's revelation as a universal divine mercy, for a leader and messenger was sent to each nation without exception (6:130-131; 10:74; 16:36; 31:7; 35:24). Such equality of people acts as an imperative principle of justice, for the Arabic word *ādil*, used to define this principle etymologically means "equality", "equitable".

The universality of divine guidance giving a hope for eternal salvation to all peoples from the times of Adam denotes the principle of justice in its another aspect--in the individual character of responsibility. The Koranic concept of man and his moral life rejects the idea of "original sin" according to which the responsibility for this sin passed down to all subsequent generations and its consequences would allegedly be surmounted (in the long run) upon the coming of a transcendental Savior. According to the Koran, Adam and Eve, failing to obey God's command, were banished from paradise and taken to the hostile world. But then God forgave them and promised to reveal to them a Law which they could follow in order to be granted salvation (2:37-38). Thus, humankind from the very beginning of its existence had been given a road to salvation.

The Koranic prophetism teaches that the prophetic missions are not only universal, but also identical in their substantial content. All the Prophets preached the same religion (4:163; 21:92; 23:51-52; 42:15) founded on the belief that there is only one God (16:36; 21:25; 41:14). In this sense, all religions based on the belief in divine revelation are equal, and no group holds a monopoly on the truth. As the Koran repeatedly reminds, "We make no difference between one and another of them" (2:136, 285; 3:84; 4:152).

Monotheism as the general faith of all believers in divine revelation constitutes a particular confession pleasing to God, which can solely guarantee salvation and which was defined twice in the Koran as "Islam" (3:19, 85). The very context of these ayats invalidates the exclusivistic interpretation of Islam as a religion given only to Muhammad. Another essential fact is that the Koran often applies the epithet "Muslim" to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other pre-Muslim prophets (2:128, 133; 3:67; 10:72; 12:84, 101; 27:42; 51:36).

Moreover, "Islam" is the authentic "natural faith" (*fitrah*) that God has originally given to all humans (see: 30:30). Such confession of the human race occurred at a certain metaphysical transhistorical time when the Lord had gathered together the souls of all future generations of people and they avowed their faith in Him (7:172).

Another pluralistic measure of the Koranic prophetism is linked with the differentiation of *din* (faith) and *shari'ah* (law). Even though God's spiritual messages to different nations are identical in the fundamental principles of belief (primarily, in a single God and future reward), their precepts designed to regulate moral, legal, social, and ritual aspects of life may vary from one nation to another and from time to time. This unity of faith for all the diversity of laws found its manifestation in Muhammad's metaphorical words about prophets being "half-brothers" (*ikhwah li-'illat*).

Variety in the world is preconditioned by God's will and wisdom. The differences of people in their languages and the color of their skin are "divine signs for the learned" (30:22). Originally, mankind belonged to the one race and spiritual community, but then God willed to divide them both into tribes and nations and religions (2:113; 49:13). Plurality in the world is in full accordance with God's will and predestination and no one must try to banish it. In particular, it is futile to enforce the integration of people into one religious community for, as the Koran stresses, if God has willed it otherwise, He would have made it Himself (10:19; 16:93) and, in general, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256).

Therefore, peace is a natural norm for the coexistence of nations and confessions: "O believers! Enter, all of you, into peace!" (2:208). The armed struggle is allowable but only for the sake of defense. The ayat 2:190 forewarns the Muslims:

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you,
But do not transgress limits;
For God loves not transgressors.

Pluralism is not damnation. It is not negative, but entirely positive. Diversity is designed not to generate discord but competition in our service for the common good:

For each of you We have appointed a law and a way.
And if God had willed He would have made you
One (religious) community.
But (He has willed it otherwise) that
He may put you to the test in what He has given you.
So compete with one another in good works.
Unto God will you be brought back,
And He will inform you about that wherein you differed. (5:48)

Pluralism should promote human solidarity, harmony, and mutual enrichment of all nations:

O mankind! We have created you male and female,
And have made you nations and tribes,
That you may know [better] one another. (49:13)

Thus, Islam rejects any autarchy--economic, intellectual, ethnic or cultural. For the sake of deeper and mutual understanding, the Muslims must have a dialogue with other communities, especially with "the People of the Book", primarily, with Christians and Jews. As the Koran teaches us, such an interconfessional and intercultural dialogue should be positive and constructive:

And argue not with the People of the Book
Unless it be in a way that is better...

And say:
We believe in that which has been revealed to us
And in that which has been revealed to you;

Our God and your God is one... (29:46)

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THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week cross-cultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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