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John-Paul II: Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*

Introduction - “Know Thyself”

1. In both East and West, we may trace a journey which has led humanity down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded—as it must—within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing. This is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition Know yourself was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as “human beings”, that is as those who “know themselves”.

Moreover, a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? These are the questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.

2. The Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be. From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: the diakonia of the truth. This mission on the one hand makes the believing community a partner in humanity's shared struggle to arrive at truth; and on the other hand it obliges the believing community to proclaim the certitudes arrived at, albeit with a sense that every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God: “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully” (1 Cor 13:12).

3. Men and women have at their disposal an array of resources for generating greater knowledge of truth so that their lives may be ever more human. Among these is philosophy, which is directly concerned with asking the question of life's meaning and sketching an answer to it. Philosophy emerges, then, as one of noblest of human tasks. According to its Greek etymology, the term philosophy means “love of wisdom”. Born and nurtured when the human being first asked questions about the reason for things and their purpose, philosophy shows in different modes and forms that the desire for truth is part of human nature itself. It is an innate property of human reason to ask why things are as they are, even though the answers which gradually emerge are set within a horizon which reveals how the different human cultures are complementary.

Philosophy's powerful influence on the formation and development of the cultures of the West should not obscure the influence it has also had upon the ways of understanding existence found in the East. Every people has its own native and seminal wisdom which, as a true cultural treasure, tends to find voice and develop in forms which are genuinely philosophical. One example of this is the basic form of philosophical knowledge which is evident to this day in the postulates which inspire national and international legal systems in regulating the life of society.

4. Nonetheless, it is true that a single term conceals a variety of meanings. Hence the need for a preliminary clarification. Driven by the desire to discover the ultimate truth of existence, human beings seek to acquire those universal elements of knowledge which enable them to understand themselves better and to advance in their own self-realization. These fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the wonder awakened in them by the contemplation of creation: human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny. Here begins, then, the journey which will lead them to discover ever new frontiers of knowledge. Without wonder, men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal.

Through philosophy's work, the ability to speculate which is proper to the human intellect produces a rigorous mode of thought; and then in turn, through the logical coherence of the affirmations made and the organic unity of their content, it produces a systematic body of knowledge. In different cultural contexts and at different times, this process has yielded results which have produced genuine systems of thought. Yet often enough in history this has brought with it the temptation to identify one single stream with the whole of philosophy. In such cases, we are clearly dealing with a "philosophical pride" which seeks to present its own partial and imperfect view as the complete reading of all reality. In effect, every philosophical system, while it should always be respected in its wholeness, without any instrumentalization, must still recognize the primacy of philosophical enquiry, from which it stems and which it ought loyally to serve.

Although times change and knowledge increases, it is possible to discern a core of philosophical insight within the history of thought as a whole. Consider, for example, the principles of non-contradiction, finality and causality, as well as the concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness. Consider as well certain fundamental moral norms which are shared by all. These are among the indications that, beyond different schools of thought, there exists a body of knowledge which may be judged a kind of spiritual heritage of humanity. It is as if we had come upon an implicit philosophy, as a result of which all feel that they possess these principles, albeit in a general and unreflective way. Precisely because it is shared in some measure by all, this knowledge should serve as a kind of reference-point for the different philosophical schools. Once reason successfully intuits and formulates the first universal principles of being and correctly draws from them conclusions which are coherent both logically and ethically, then it may be called right reason or, as the ancients called it, *orthós logos*, *recta ratio*.

5. On her part, the Church cannot but set great value upon reason's drive to attain goals which render people's lives ever more worthy. She sees in philosophy the way to come to know fundamental truths about human life. At the same time, the Church considers philosophy an indispensable help for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it.

Therefore, following upon similar initiatives by my Predecessors, I wish to reflect upon this special activity of human reason. I judge it necessary to do so because, at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected. Modern philosophy clearly has the great merit of focusing attention upon man. From this starting-point, human reason with its many questions has developed further its yearning to know more and to know it ever more deeply. Complex systems of thought have thus been built, yielding results in the different fields of knowledge and fostering the development of culture and history. Anthropology, logic, the natural sciences, history, linguistics and so forth—the whole universe of knowledge has been involved in one way or another. Yet the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason, in its one-sided concern to investigate human subjectivity, seems to have forgotten that men and women are always called to direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data, in the mistaken belief that technology must dominate all. It has happened therefore that reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being. Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing. Rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth, modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned.

This has given rise to different forms of agnosticism and relativism which have led philosophical research to lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism. Recent times have seen the rise to prominence of various doctrines which tend to devalue even the truths which had been judged certain. A legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today's most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in truth. Even certain conceptions of life coming from the East betray this lack of confidence, denying truth its exclusive character and assuming that truth reveals itself equally in different doctrines, even if they contradict one another. On this understanding, everything is reduced to opinion; and there is a sense of being adrift. While, on the one hand, philosophical thinking has succeeded in coming closer to the reality of human life and its forms of expression, it has also tended to pursue issues—existential, hermeneutical or linguistic—which ignore the radical question of the truth about personal existence, about being and about God. Hence we see among the men and women of our time, and not just in some philosophers, attitudes of widespread distrust of the human being's great capacity for knowledge. With a false modesty, people rest content with partial and provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human, personal and social existence. In short, the hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive answers to these questions has dwindled.

(https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html)

Servais Pinckaers

The Sources of Christian Ethics

pp. 18-24

The place of happiness in Christian
ethics

Pinckaers, Servais. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1995.



In any case, something else is abundantly clear: St. Thomas gives priority to the question of happiness in his treatise on beatitude. This treatise is in no sense a preamble: it is the keystone of the whole moral edifice; it determines its ultimate end and general orientation. The entire structure of the second part of the *Summa* depends directly on the answer to the question of happiness discussed in this first treatise.

The stress on happiness over obligation is confirmed when we look at St. Thomas's sources, the currents of thought preceding him. For earlier thinkers, whether they were philosophers with Aristotle as their principal mentor or theologians following the Greek and Latin Fathers (notably St. Augustine), the question of happiness or "the good life" was beyond any doubt the principal concern of morality. Aristotle devotes the first and last books of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the study of happiness. St. Augustine, countering Manichean heresy, did not hesitate for an instant about the reasonableness of his opening thesis: "Everyone wants to be happy. There is no one who will not agree with me on this almost before the words are out of my mouth."⁶ He then went on to show how the Gospel offers the true answer to what is our highest happiness (*hominis optimum*), the leitmotif of morality. Later, in the brief treatise on prayer addressed to Proba, St. Augustine in three words answered the difficult question about what we should ask of God: "*Ora beatam vitam*"—"Ask for the happy life." This is how he related prayer to the desire for happiness; prayer utters the desire to God. There is no point in multiplying quotations; we need only reflect.

To anyone with an open mind, one huge fact stands out in the history of morality: for the ancients, Christians and pagans alike, the question of happiness was primary. As they saw it, morality in its totality was simply the answer to this question. The thing was obvious; it never occurred to them to talk about it. St. Augustine even thought that the question of happiness was at the root of philosophy: "A person engages in philosophy only in order to be happy," he wrote in *The City of God*.⁷

This massive historical evidence stands out in bold relief against the kind of morality conceived by modern philosophers and theologians. Concentration on obligations does away completely with the question of happiness, perhaps "inadvertently."⁸ We can accurately point to two

6. *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, 3.4. Bibliothèque Augustinienne, vol. 1, trans. B. Roland (Paris: Gosselin, 1936).

7. *De civitate Dei*, 19.1

8. For example, in J. B. Vittrant's *Théologie morale*, formerly used in French seminaries, there is no reference to "happiness" or "beatitude" in the topical index, still less in the table of contents. This is true of most manuals not following the Thomistic tradition.

main periods in the history of morality, the first dominated by the question of happiness and the second by the question of obligation.

Two great models of moral thought are therefore open to us. The question of happiness leads to a different organization of the subject matter, according to virtues rather than commandments. Ethics becomes the science of ways leading to true happiness, those qualities of soul and heart that we call virtues.

Have we come upon one more area of conflict between ancients and moderns? Must we follow the ancients in order to restore the concept of happiness to morality? This dilemma is simplistic, the option superficial. A sense of happiness and a knowledge of its importance for the moral quality of life are not lost upon our times. What would life be worth without happiness? And what purpose would a system of morality serve if it gave no hope of attaining it? Even Kant could not do without it, but only deferred the happiness to another world. Whatever we may think about morality, we know instinctively that the question of happiness is a basic one. It is the primordial longing of every human being. Nothing can snuff it out.

Whether we decide to approach ethics by way of the question of happiness or by way of the question of obligation is going to have some unexpected consequences. Simply to highlight the problem, I shall point out two.

1. Several important themes in ancient moral thought have disappeared from modern ethics precisely because of the latter's emphasis on the concept of obligation. First there is the theme of beatitude, which we are presently considering. Then there is the theme of friendship, discussed by Aristotle in Books 8 and 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This is how he introduces it: "[Friendship] is absolutely indispensable: even though possessed of every other good thing, without friends a person would have no desire to live." According to him, the whole point of law and the political life, over and above justice, was to provide for friendship among citizens.

The theme of friendship was prominent among the Greek Fathers, even those who lived in the desert, as Cassian attests in his sixteenth conference. It reached its climax in St. Thomas, who defined charity as friendship with God (IIaIIae, q 23) and who described the work of the Holy Spirit in the world as a work of friendship (*Summa contra gentiles* I.21–22.)

This theme has completely disappeared from modern books on morality. The reason is obvious: friendship, being essentially free, could hardly be considered an obligation. Friendship can create obligations, but the inverse is not true. As a result, friendship has been excluded from

the field of morality as an indifferent sentiment—mistrusted by moral theologians, moreover, because of “particular friendships.”

Likewise, we will look in vain for a simple allusion, still less for a full treatment, of the virtue of courage in many of the manuals. Courage is not a matter of obligation. Yet it is numbered among the four cardinal virtues. St. Thomas associated it with the ideal of martyrdom, the inspiration of the early centuries of Christianity. Everyone knows from experience how great is the need for courage throughout our moral life.

It is easy to reinstate friendship and courage in moral theology if we begin with the question of happiness. Can a person be happy without the harmonious relationship we call friendship? It is a concrete form of charity. Again, how can we be happy without the courage that strengthens us in the face of difficulties and keeps us steady in the day-to-day grind? This is all the more true when our goal surpasses human power and calls for an audacious faith and trust in the Word of God.

2. Another consequence for moral theology has to do with its relationship to sacred Scripture. A moral system that addresses the question of happiness easily finds answers in Scripture. Texts abound: the Beatitudes with their corresponding promises, the teaching of the Gospels and St. Paul on the virtues, the Wisdom literature. The moral tracts of the Fathers of the Church, too, are interwoven with quotations revealing a continual pondering on Scripture.

Adherents of the emphasis on obligation quote Scripture rarely. Their commonest reference is to the Decalogue, seen as an expression of the natural law and a code of basic rules. For the rest, they manage to find very few texts imperative enough and strict enough to suit their purpose, which is the framing of their particular moral structure. They pay no attention whatsoever to the sapiential books, or to exhortatory passages, although these occupy a fair amount of space in St. Paul’s descriptions of the Christian life. It seems as if the Apostle and the other sacred authors have little relevance for moral theology, at least in the modern sense.

This is a serious question for ethics. To approach it solely from the standpoint of obligation leads logically, inevitably, to a minimal use of Scripture. Surely this is a sign that the sacred authors held a different view, closer to that of the Fathers, who began with the question of happiness. Much is at stake: the scriptural, evangelical, and Christian dimension of morality.

It is well worth our while to raise the question of happiness openly, even though we may meet with resistance. Especially since Kant, any moral system viewing human happiness as a goal has been suspected of hedonism; a theory of morality based on happiness must be self-serving.

This is the opinion of Father Bernard Häring, for example. He suggests that personal perfection and individual salvation are the ultimate end of Aristotelian ethics, “as if loving dialogue with God were no more than a necessary means for attaining our final end: self-perfection, the soul’s salvation, and beatitude.” For Häring, adaptations of Aristotelian ethics for Christian purposes opposes Gospel morality and values, which are based on the preaching of the Commandments and the law. These ought to remain the central concepts of Christian moral teaching, he believes, since they guarantee God’s sovereignty and provide the only basis for any discussion of the subject.⁹

We need to return to the fundamental problem of hedonism, which calls into question the entire moral system of the ancients. Here I shall simply give a partial answer, to show us a way out. The quality of our desire for happiness depends on the love that inspires it and on our concept of the human person. If the love is selfish, and still more if the human person is seen as a being with needs craving satisfaction, then the desire for happiness is bound to be self-centered. Only a utilitarian moral theory could be constructed on such a foundation, one directly contrary to Gospel teaching.

If, on the other hand, a person is capable of true, unselfish love for God and neighbor—the love of friendship of which St. Thomas speaks—then the desire for happiness can lead that person to be open to God and neighbor and to become generous. Can we love others truly without wanting their happiness? In the same sense St. Thomas, in defining charity as friendship, sees a sharing in God’s beatitude as charity’s foundation. As St. Paul reports the Lord’s words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

The discovery that giving is the path to true happiness is a decisive experience. It transforms our desire and reveals to us the most authentic moral values. This was the kind of desire for happiness that the Fathers envisioned when they shaped their moral theology: the open, generous desire that characterizes friendship. They had no problem in reconciling this with the Gospels and their teaching on charity.

The question of obligation and the question of happiness: these are so fundamental that they give rise to two different conceptions of moral theology. They have often been felt to be in opposition, as if either one

9. Bernard Häring, *The Law of Christ*, trans. Kaiser (Paramus, N.J.: Newman Press, 1961), vol. 1, 41–42: “. . . as though the living friendship with God was only an essential means for the full attainment of the moral purpose—it is evident that the concept of self-perfection or external happiness and salvation cannot be the sound and appropriate foundation for a religious moral system.”

would have to cancel out the other. But I am convinced that the moral theory of beatitude, if properly understood, can perfectly well include the question of obligation and accord the Commandments a fitting role within its structure.

This would be to place Christian ethics in a very different context. It would be seen as the science of happiness and of the ways that lead thereto. Far more attractive, it would draw everyone because of its positive and dynamic aspect, and this would harmonize well with the perspectives of Scripture. In Scripture, God always approaches us with promises of happiness before speaking of precepts. Inspired by the desire for happiness, the movements of the human heart and all its actions, even on the level of emotion, can work together to foster moral growth, as St. Thomas teaches in his treatise on the passions.

As a result of this, the roles of the ethicist, the priest, and the Christian educator are transformed. Their first responsibility is to teach the Beatitudes, the Kingdom of God, and the paths that lead to it, including all of Christ's radical demands. It becomes each Christian's mission to give to others Christ's answer to the great question of happiness.

But the question of happiness does not stand alone. To exhaust its possibilities or present all its aspects does not suffice; the question of happiness opens up further questions for us to explore.

III. LIFE'S MEANING AND GOAL

Alfred Adler was right when he recognized the importance, in a person's psychic life, of orientation to a goal. "The first thing we can discover in the psychic trends is that the movements are directed toward a goal. . . . The psychic life of man is determined by his goal. No human being can think, feel, will, dream, without all these activities being determined, continued, modified and directed toward an ever-present objective. . . . We cannot conceive of psychic evolution except within the pattern of an ever-present objective." And further on: "Because of this possibility of many meanings, we can never judge the expressions of psychic life as single isolated phenomena; on the contrary, we must evaluate them according to the unit goal toward which they are directed. The essential meaning can be learned only when we know what value a phenomenon has in the entire context of a person's life."¹⁰

10. A. Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*, trans. Wolfe (New York: Greenberg, 1946), 19-20 and 82.

Though not always articulated, the problem of life's meaning and goal is primordial. It matures within us through experience and reflection. Yet it is already present, in germ, in the multiple activities in which we become involved. We dread emptiness and seek a great variety of things to fill up our time and lives: wealth, work, pleasure, knowledge, politics, love. Each of these gives a sense of purpose and meaning to our lives. The hardest thing for us to endure is a sense of emptiness or a conviction that all our hopes and plans are doomed to stillbirth. When one failure follows another we see a void opening before us, the chasm of meaninglessness.

The question of life's meaning and goal is one aspect of the question of happiness. Philosophy, and then theology, came to define happiness as our ultimate end. Giving purpose to all lesser ends, happiness is always desired for its own sake and for no other; it is the sum of all goods and the goal of all goals. It is the final object of all we do, though we do not always advert to this consciously. We may deceive ourselves about it, or hide from it, like the miser for whom money is everything.

The question of our goal or final end is, as it were, the backbone, essential to the question of happiness. This is why St. Thomas began with it in his treatise on happiness.

Modern ethicists do not address our ultimate end, believing it too speculative for practical moral teaching. Actually, they have lost the sense of finality and of its importance. Their main objective—I might almost say their final end—has become the study of individual actions in relation to law, the study of cases of conscience. Their field is the morality of actions, and finality is accorded only a secondary value.

To give an example, consider the difference between a miser's attendance at Mass and that of a religious sister. The miser believes his presence in church is going to further the business transactions of his day; prayer matters little or nothing. The religious on the other hand draws strength from the Eucharist to devote herself wholeheartedly to her nursing or teaching. Considered from the point of view of the law of attendance at Sunday Mass, the actions of both are equally praiseworthy, but they differ profoundly because of the final ends that motivate them. One honors God with his lips but dishonors him by making money his ultimate goal. The other, finding all her happiness in God, is giving him sincere love which is the only true worship.

Since the question of life's goal or ultimate end is so important, we might define Christian ethics as the science that teaches us the meaning of life. It shows us the supreme end toward which all our actions should be directed, the end that gives them meaning, value, and wholeness.

Within this perspective, the work of the ethicist and the priest will be to help every Christian, indeed all whose lives they touch, to respond personally to the question of the real meaning of life. Their task will be to point out the highest good in the light of the Gospel and to show how all lesser goods can lead to it.

Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* (Κύρια Δόξαι)

1. A blessed and indestructible being has no trouble himself and brings no trouble upon any other being; so he is free from anger and partiality, for all such things imply weakness.
2. Death is nothing to us; for that which has been dissolved into its elements experiences no sensations, and that which has no sensation is nothing to us.
3. The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain. When such pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together.
4. Continuous bodily pain does not last long; instead, pain, if extreme, is present a very short time, and even that degree of pain which slightly exceeds bodily pleasure does not last for many days at once. Diseases of long duration allow an excess of bodily pleasure over pain.
5. It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and honorably and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and honorably and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the man is not able to live wisely, though he lives honorably and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life.
6. In order to obtain protection from other men, any means for attaining this end is a natural good.
7. Some men want fame and status, thinking that they would thus make themselves secure against other men. If the life of such men really were secure, they have attained a natural good; if, however, it is insecure, they have not attained the end which by nature's own prompting they originally sought.
8. No pleasure is a bad thing in itself, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail disturbances many times greater than the pleasures themselves.
9. If every pleasure had been capable of accumulation, not only over time but also over the entire body or at least over the principal parts of our nature, then pleasures would never differ from one another.
10. If the things that produce the pleasures of profligate men really freed them from fears of the mind concerning celestial and atmospheric phenomena, the fear of death, and the fear of pain; if, further, they taught them to limit their desires, we should never have any fault to find with such persons, for they would then be filled with pleasures from every source and would never have pain of body or mind, which is what is bad.
11. If we had never been troubled by celestial and atmospheric phenomena, nor by fears about death, nor by our ignorance of the limits of pains and desires, we should have had no need of natural science.
12. It is impossible for someone to dispel his fears about the most important matters if he doesn't know the nature of the universe but still gives some credence to myths. So without the study of nature there is no enjoyment of pure pleasure.
13. There is no advantage to obtaining protection from other men so long as we are alarmed by events above or below the earth or in general by whatever happens in the boundless universe.
14. Protection from other men, secured to some extent by the power to expel and by material prosperity, in its purest form comes from a quiet life withdrawn from the multitude.

Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* (Κύρια Δόξαι)

15. The wealth required by nature is limited and is easy to procure; but the wealth required by vain ideals extends to infinity.
16. Chance seldom interferes with the wise man; his greatest and highest interests have been, are, and will be, directed by reason throughout his whole life.
17. The just man is most free from disturbance, while the unjust is full of the utmost disturbance.
18. Bodily pleasure does not increase when the pain of want has been removed; after that it only admits of variation. The limit of mental pleasure, however, is reached when we reflect on these bodily pleasures and their related emotions, which used to cause the mind the greatest alarms.
19. Unlimited time and limited time afford an equal amount of pleasure, if we measure the limits of that pleasure by reason.
20. The flesh receives as unlimited the limits of pleasure; and to provide it requires unlimited time. But the mind, intellectually grasping what the end and limit of the flesh is, and banishing the terrors of the future, procures a complete and perfect life, and we have no longer any need of unlimited time. Nevertheless the mind does not shun pleasure, and even when circumstances make death imminent, the mind does not lack enjoyment of the best life.
21. He who understands the limits of life knows that it is easy to obtain that which removes the pain of want and makes the whole of life complete and perfect. Thus he has no longer any need of things which involve struggle.
22. We must consider both the ultimate end and all clear sensory evidence, to which we refer our opinions; for otherwise everything will be full of uncertainty and confusion.
23. If you fight against all your sensations, you will have no standard to which to refer, and thus no means of judging even those sensations which you claim are false.
24. If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to distinguish between opinion about things awaiting confirmation and that which is already confirmed to be present, whether in sensation or in feelings or in any application of intellect to the presentations, you will confuse the rest of your sensations by your groundless opinion and so you will reject every standard of truth. If in your ideas based upon opinion you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not avoid error, as you will be maintaining the entire basis for doubt in every judgment between correct and incorrect opinion.
25. If you do not on every occasion refer each of your actions to the ultimate end prescribed by nature, but instead of this in the act of choice or avoidance turn to some other end, your actions will not be consistent with your theories.
26. All desires that do not lead to pain when they remain unsatisfied are unnecessary, but the desire is easily got rid of, when the thing desired is difficult to obtain or the desires seem likely to produce harm.
27. Of all the means which wisdom acquires to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is friendship.

28. The same conviction which inspires confidence that nothing we have to fear is eternal or even of long duration, also enables us to see that in the limited evils of this life nothing enhances our security so much as friendship.

29. Of our desires some are natural and necessary, others are natural but not necessary; and others are neither natural nor necessary, but are due to groundless opinion.

30. Those natural desires which entail no pain when unsatisfied, though pursued with an intense effort, are also due to groundless opinion; and it is not because of their own nature they are not got rid of but because of man's groundless opinions.

31. Natural justice is a pledge of reciprocal benefit, to prevent one man from harming or being harmed by another.

32. Those animals which are incapable of making binding agreements with one another not to inflict nor suffer harm are without either justice or injustice; and likewise for those peoples who either could not or would not form binding agreements not to inflict nor suffer harm.

33. There never was such a thing as absolute justice, but only agreements made in mutual dealings among men in whatever places at various times providing against the infliction or suffering of harm.

34. Injustice is not an evil in itself, but only in consequence of the fear which is associated with the apprehension of being discovered by those appointed to punish such actions.

35. It is impossible for a man who secretly violates the terms of the agreement not to harm or be harmed to feel confident that he will remain undiscovered, even if he has already escaped ten thousand times; for until his death he is never sure that he will not be detected.

36. In general justice is the same for all, for it is something found mutually beneficial in men's dealings, but in its application to particular places or other circumstances the same thing is not necessarily just for everyone.

37. Among the things held to be just by law, whatever is proved to be of advantage in men's dealings has the stamp of justice, whether or not it be the same for all; but if a man makes a law and it does not prove to be mutually advantageous, then this is no longer just. And if what is mutually advantageous varies and only for a time corresponds to our concept of justice, nevertheless for that time it is just for those who do not trouble themselves about empty words, but look simply at the facts.

38. Where without any change in circumstances the things held to be just by law are seen not to correspond with the concept of justice in actual practice, such laws are not really just; but wherever the laws have ceased to be advantageous because of a change in circumstances, in that case the laws were for that time just when they were advantageous for the mutual dealings of the citizens, and subsequently ceased to be just when they were no longer advantageous.

39. The man who best knows how to meet external threats makes into one family all the creatures he can; and those he can not, he at any rate does not treat as aliens; and where he finds even this impossible, he avoids all dealings, and, so far as is advantageous, excludes them from his life.

40. Those who possess the power to defend themselves against threats by their neighbors, being thus in possession of the surest guarantee of security, live the most pleasant life with one another;

Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* (Κύρια Δόξαι)

and their enjoyment of the fullest intimacy is such that if one of them dies prematurely, the others do not lament his death as though it called for pity.

(<http://www.epicurus.net/en/principal.html>)

THE PROBLEM OF SOCRATES

1 About life, the wisest men of all ages have come to the same conclusion: it is no good. Always and everywhere one has heard the same sound from their mouths — a sound full of doubt, full of melancholy, full of weariness of life, full of resistance to life. Even Socrates said, as he died: "To live — that means to be sick a long time: I owe Asclepius the Savior a rooster." Even Socrates was tired of life. What does that prove? What does it demonstrate? At one time, one would have said (and it has been said loud enough by our pessimists): "At least something must be true here! The consensus of the sages must show us the truth." Shall we still talk like that today? May we? "At least something must be sick here," we retort. These wisest men of all ages — they should first be scrutinized closely. Were they all perhaps shaky on their legs? tottery? decadent? late? Could it be that wisdom appears on earth as a raven, attracted by a little whiff of carrion?

2 The irreverent idea that the great sages are types of decline first occurred to me precisely in a case where it is most strongly opposed by both scholarly and unscholarly prejudice: I realized that Socrates and Plato were symptoms of degeneration, tools of the Greek dissolution, pseudo-Greek, anti-Greek (*Birth of Tragedy*, 1872). The consensus of the sages — I recognized this ever more clearly — proves least of all that they were right in what they agreed on: it shows rather that they themselves, these wisest men, shared some physiological attribute, and because of this adopted the same negative attitude to life — had to adopt it. Judgments, judgments of value about life, for it or against it, can in the end never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they are worthy of consideration only as symptoms; in themselves such judgments are meaningless. One must stretch out one's hands and attempt to grasp this amazing subtlety, that the value of life cannot be estimated. Not by the living, for they are an interested party, even a bone of contention, and not impartial judges; not by the dead, for a different reason. For a philosopher to object to putting a value on life is an objection others make against him, a question mark concerning his wisdom, an un-wisdom. Indeed? All these great wise men — they were not only decadents but not wise at all. But let us return to the problem of Socrates.

3 By birth, Socrates belonged to the lowest class: Socrates was plebeian. We are told, and can see in sculptures of him, how ugly he was. But ugliness, in itself an objection, is among the Greeks almost a refutation. Was Socrates a Greek at all? Ugliness is often enough the expression of a development that has been crossed, thwarted in some way. Or it appears as declining development. The anthropological criminologists tell us that the typical criminal is ugly: *monstrum in fronte*, *monstrum in animo* [monstrous in appearance, monstrous in spirit]. But the criminal is a decadent. Was Socrates a typical criminal? At least that would be consistent with the famous judgment of the physiognomist that so offended the friends of Socrates. This foreigner told Socrates to his face that he was a *monstrum* — that he harbored in himself all the worst vices and appetites. And Socrates merely answered: "You know me, sir!"

4 Socrates' decadence is suggested not only by the admitted wantonness and anarchy of his instincts, but also by the overdevelopment of his logical ability and his characteristic thwarted sarcasm. Nor should we forget those auditory hallucinations which, as "the daimonion of Socrates," have been given a religious interpretation. Everything about Socrates is exaggerated, buffo, a caricature; everything is at the same time concealed, ulterior, underground. I want to understand

what idiosyncrasy begot that Socratic idea that reason and virtue equal happiness — that most bizarre of all equations which is, moreover, opposed to every instinct of the earlier Greeks.

5 With Socrates, Greek taste changes in favor of logical argument. What really happened there? Above all, a noble taste is vanquished; with dialectics the plebs come to the top. Before Socrates, argumentative conversation was repudiated in good society: it was considered bad manners, compromising. The young were warned against it. Furthermore, any presentation of one's motives was distrusted. Honest things, like honest men, do not have to explain themselves so openly. What must first be proved is worth little. Wherever authority still forms part of good bearing, where one does not give reasons but commands, the logician is a kind of buffoon: one laughs at him, one does not take him seriously. Socrates was the buffoon who got himself taken seriously: what really happened there?

6 One chooses logical argument only when one has no other means. One knows that one arouses mistrust with it, that it is not very persuasive. Nothing is easier to nullify than a logical argument: the tedium of long speeches proves this. It is a kind of self-defense for those who no longer have other weapons. Unless one has to insist on what is already one's right, there is no use for it. The Jews were argumentative for that reason; Reynard the Fox also — and Socrates too?

7 Is the irony of Socrates an expression of revolt? Of plebeian resentment? Does he, as one oppressed, enjoy his own ferocity in the knife thrusts of his argument? Does he avenge himself on the noble audience he fascinates? As a dialectician, he holds a merciless tool in his hand; he can become a tyrant by means of it; he compromises those he conquers. The dialectician leaves it to his opponent to prove that he is not an idiot: he enrages and neutralizes his opponent at the same time. The dialectician renders the intellect of his opponent powerless. Indeed, in Socrates, is dialectic only a form of revenge?

8 I have explained how it was that Socrates could repel: it is therefore all the more necessary to explain how he could fascinate. That he discovered a new kind of contest, that he became its first fencing master for the noble circles of Athens, is one point. He fascinated by appealing to the competitive impulse of the Greeks — he introduced a variation into the wrestling match between young men and youths. Socrates was a great erotic.

9 But Socrates guessed even more. He saw through the noble Athenians; he saw that his own case, his idiosyncrasy, was no longer exceptional. The same kind of degeneration was quietly developing everywhere: old Athens was coming to an end. And Socrates understood that the world needed him — his method, his cure, his personal artifice of self-preservation. Everywhere the instincts were in anarchy, everywhere one was within sight of excess: *monstrum in animo* was the common danger. "The impulses want to play the tyrant; one must invent a counter-tyrant who is stronger." After the physiognomist had revealed to Socrates who he was — a cave of bad appetites — the great master of irony let slip another clue to his character. "This is true," he said, "but I mastered them all." How did Socrates become master over himself? His case was, at bottom, merely the extreme case, only the most striking instance of what was then beginning to be a epidemic: no one was any longer master over himself, the instincts turned against themselves. He fascinated, being an extreme case; his awe inspiring ugliness proclaimed him as such to all who could see: he fascinated, of course, even more as an answer, a solution, an apparent cure for this disease.

10 When one finds it necessary to turn reason into a tyrant, as Socrates did, the danger cannot be slight that something else threatens to play the tyrant. Rationality was hit upon as a savior; neither Socrates nor his "patients" had any choice about being rational: it was necessary, it was the last resort. The fanaticism with which all Greek reflection throws itself upon rationality betrays a desperate situation; there was danger, there was but one choice: either to perish or — to be absurdly rational. The moralism of the Greek philosophers from Plato on is pathologically conditioned; so is their reverence for logical argument. Reason equals virtue and happiness, that means merely that one must imitate Socrates and counter the dark appetites with a permanent daylight — the daylight of reason. One must be clever, clear, bright at any price: any concession to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads downward.

11 I have explained how Socrates fascinated his audience: he seemed to be a physician, a savior. Is it necessary to go on to demonstrate the error in his faith in "rationality at any price"? It is a self-deception on the part of philosophers and moralists if they believe that they are extricating themselves from decadence by waging war against it. Extrication lies beyond their strength: what they choose as a means, as salvation, is itself but another expression of decadence; they change the form of decadence, but they do not get rid of decadence itself. Socrates was a misunderstanding; any improvement morality, including Christianity, is a misunderstanding. The most blinding daylight; rationality at any price; life, bright, cold, cautious, conscious, without instinct, in opposition to the instincts — all this was a kind of disease, merely a disease, and by no means a return to "virtue," to "health," to happiness. To have to fight the instincts — that is the definition of decadence: as long as life is ascending, happiness equals instinct.

12 Did he himself understand this, this most brilliant of all self-deceivers? Was this what he said to himself in the end, in the wisdom of his courage to die? Socrates wanted to die: not Athens, but he himself chose the hemlock; he forced Athens to sentence him. "Socrates is no physician," he said softly to himself, "here death alone is the physician. Socrates himself has only been sick a long time."

(http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/twilight-of-the-idols-friedrich-neitzsche.pdf)

6 We had perhaps better consider the universal good and discuss thoroughly what is meant by it, although such an inquiry is made an uphill one by the fact that the Forms have been introduced by friends of our own. Yet it would perhaps be thought to be better, indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers or lovers of wisdom; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends.

The men who introduced this doctrine did not posit Ideas of classes within which they recognized priority and posteriority (which is the reason why they did not maintain the existence of an Idea embracing all numbers); but the term 'good' is used both in the category of substance and in that of quality and in that of relation, and that which is per se, i.e. substance, is prior in nature to the relative (for the latter is like an off shoot and accident of being); so that there could not be a common Idea set over all these goods. Further, since 'good' has as many senses as 'being' (for it is predicated both in the category of substance, as of God and of reason, and in quality, i.e. of the virtues, and in quantity, i.e. of that which is moderate, and in relation, i.e. of the useful, and in time, i.e. of the right opportunity, and in place, i.e. of the right locality and the like), clearly it cannot be something universally present in all cases and single; for then it could not have been predicated in all the categories but in one only. Further, since of the things answering to one Idea there is one science, there would have been one science of all the goods; but as it is there are many sciences even of the things that fall under one category, e.g. of opportunity, for opportunity in war is studied by strategics and in disease by medicine, and the moderate in food is studied by medicine and in exercise by the science of gymnastics. And one might ask the question, what in the world they mean by 'a thing itself', is (as is the case) in 'man himself' and in a particular man the account of man is one and the same. For in so far as they are man, they will in no respect differ; and if this is so, neither will 'good itself' and particular goods, in so far as they are good. But again it will not be good any the more for being eternal, since that which lasts long is no whiter than that which perishes in a day. The Pythagoreans seem to give a more plausible account of the good, when they place the one in the column of goods; and it is they that Speusippus seems to have followed.

But let us discuss these matters elsewhere; an objection to what we have said, however, may be discerned in the fact that the Platonists have not been speaking about all goods, and that the goods that are pursued and loved for themselves are called good by reference to a single Form, while those which tend to produce or to preserve these somehow or to prevent their contraries are called so by reference to these, and in a secondary sense. Clearly, then, goods must be spoken of in two ways, and some must be good in themselves, the others by reason of these. Let us separate, then, things good in themselves from things useful, and consider whether the former are called good by reference to a single Idea. What sort of goods would one call good in themselves? Is it those that are pursued even when isolated from others, such as intelligence, sight, and certain pleasures and honours? Certainly, if we pursue these also for the sake of something else, yet one would place them among things good in themselves. Or is nothing other than the Idea of good good in itself? In that case the Form will be empty. But if the things we have named are also things good in themselves, the account of the good will have to appear as something identical in them all, as that of whiteness is identical in snow and in white lead. But of honour, wisdom, and pleasure, just in respect of their goodness, the accounts are distinct and diverse. The good, therefore, is not some common element answering to one Idea.

But what then do we mean by the good? It is surely not like the things that only chance to have the same name. Are goods one, then, by being derived from one good or by all contributing to one good, or are they rather one by analogy? Certainly as sight is in the body, so is reason in the soul, and so on in other cases. But perhaps these subjects had better be dismissed for the present; for

perfect precision about them would be more appropriate to another branch of philosophy. And similarly with regard to the Idea; even if there is some one good which is universally predicable of goods or is capable of separate and independent existence, clearly it could not be achieved or attained by man; but we are now seeking something attainable. Perhaps, however, some one might think it worth while to recognize this with a view to the goods that are attainable and achievable; for having this as a sort of pattern we shall know better the goods that are good for us, and if we know them shall attain them. This argument has some plausibility, but seems to clash with the procedure of the sciences; for all of these, though they aim at some good and seek to supply the deficiency of it, leave on one side the knowledge of the good. Yet that all the exponents of the arts should be ignorant of, and should not even seek, so great an aid is not probable. It is hard, too, to see how a weaver or a carpenter will be benefited in regard to his own craft by knowing this 'good itself', or how the man who has viewed the Idea itself will be a better doctor or general thereby. For a doctor seems not even to study health in this way, but the health of man, or perhaps rather the health of a particular man; it is individuals that he is healing. But enough of these topics.

7 Let us again return to the good we are seeking, and ask what it can be. It seems different in different actions and arts; it is different in medicine, in strategy, and in the other arts likewise. What then is the good of each? Surely that for whose sake everything else is done. In medicine this is health, in strategy victory, in architecture a house, in any other sphere something else, and in every action and pursuit the end; for it is for the sake of this that all men do whatever else they do. Therefore, if there is an end for all that we do, this will be the good achievable by action, and if there are more than one, these will be the goods achievable by action.

So the argument has by a different course reached the same point; but we must try to state this even more clearly. Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends; but the chief good is evidently something final. Therefore, if there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.

Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for self and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.

From the point of view of self-sufficiency the same result seems to follow; for the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship. But some limit must be set to this; for if we extend our requirement to ancestors and descendants and friends' friends we are in for an infinite series. Let us examine this question, however, on another occasion; the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others- if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the

addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable. Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.

Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude, and a clearer account of what it is still desired. This might perhaps be given, if we could first ascertain the function of man. For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or an artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he born without a function? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these? What then can this be? Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but it also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle; of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought. And, as 'life of the rational element' also has two meanings, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, and if we say 'so-and-so-and' a good so-and-so' have a function which is the same in kind, e.g. a lyre, and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of goodness being added to the name of the function (for the function of a lyre-player is to play the lyre, and that of a good lyre-player is to do so well): if this is the case, and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.

But we must add 'in a complete life.' For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy.

Let this serve as an outline of the good; for we must presumably first sketch it roughly, and then later fill in the details. But it would seem that any one is capable of carrying on and articulating what has once been well outlined, and that time is a good discoverer or partner in such a work; to which facts the advances of the arts are due; for any one can add what is lacking. And we must also remember what has been said before, and not look for precision in all things alike, but in each class of things such precision as accords with the subject-matter, and so much as is appropriate to the inquiry. For a carpenter and a geometer investigate the right angle in different ways; the former does so in so far as the right angle is useful for his work, while the latter inquires what it is or what sort of thing it is; for he is a spectator of the truth. We must act in the same way, then, in all other matters as well, that our main task may not be subordinated to minor questions. Nor must we demand the cause in all matters alike; it is enough in some cases that the fact be well established, as in the case of the first principles; the fact is the primary thing or first principle. Now of first principles we see some by induction, some by perception, some by a certain habituation, and others too in other ways. But each set of principles we must try to investigate in the natural way, and we must take pains to state them definitely, since they have a great influence on what follows. For the beginning is thought to be more than half of the whole, and many of the questions we ask are cleared up by it.

Trans. W.D. Ross (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html>)

John Finnis

Fundamentals of Ethics

pp. 14-23

The practicality of ethics

Finnis, John. *Fundamentals of Ethics*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 1983.



investigations than in retracing those investigations, subscribed to drastic simplifications of the method of those investigations; in short, they commonly misread their masters' epistemology. And finally (iv) Aristotle himself launched at least one argument which uses or presupposes a mistaken view of the way that judgments about nature can contribute to understanding in ethics.

Let me, at last, give an example. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is fundamentally an attempt to identify (in order to participate in) the true good and point of human existence. (He supposes that to identify such an ultimate good is to supply a 'grand universal premise'⁶ for all practical thinking and thus for all reasonable action.) What does the ultimate or supreme good consist in? What, to give it a name, does *eudaimonia* ('happiness' or, better, 'flourishing') consist in? Notoriously, Aristotle's answer has been found obscure, equivocal and in various ways unconvincing. But my present concern is not with his answer but with his method.

I shall begin with the accounts given by two contemporary Aristotelians. Sympathetic, critical and sensitive philosophical discussion of Aristotle's ethics is readily available today, and quite a few modern moral philosophers are clearly influenced by Aristotle, and not ashamed to admit it; begin the list with John Rawls. But not many would describe themselves as Aristotelians. Let me consider two who do, Mortimer Adler and Henry Veatch.

Adler⁷ enthusiastically endorses the following conception of practical truth, a conception which is, he says, Aristotle's. With one exception, a practical or normative judgment is true if and only if it agrees with 'right desire'; the exception is 'the one self-evident principle that lies at the foundation of all moral reasoning', namely the principle that 'real goods ought to be desired'. Now, if you ask what makes a desire right, or a good a real good, Adler's answer is in each case the same: a desire is right when it is for a real good, and a good is a real good when it is the object of a desire that is not

⁶ G. E. M. Anscombe, 'Thought and Action in Aristotle: What is Practical Truth?' in *Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, vol. I (Blackwell, Oxford: 1981), p. 75.

⁷ Adler, 'Aristotle's Conception of Practical Truth and the Consequences of that Conception', *Paideia* (SUNY at Brockport), Special Aristotle Issue, 1978, pp. 158-66.

a mere want but a *need*. A need is, says Adler, a desire that is natural, i.e. 'inherent in our common human nature'. The judgment that a desire is natural is a purely 'descriptive or factual proposition': in Humean or neo-Humean terms it is an 'is' not an 'ought'. Thus, for instance, the judgment 'I ought to seek knowledge' is the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning in which the first premise is the normative principle 'Real goods ought to be desired' and the second premise is the factual truth that 'Man has a natural desire for knowledge'; being a conclusion from these two truths, the one factual but the other normative, the judgment 'I ought to seek knowledge' is a practical truth.⁸ Thus Adler.

Now Aristotle's term for the 'descriptive and factual' as opposed to the 'normative' is *theoretikē* (as opposed to *praktikē*). How, then, could the crucial 'factual' premises of Adler's practical syllogisms be the topic of an ethics which Aristotle says is *practical all the way through*? Adler himself frankly admits that in the very place where Aristotle mentions a large number of particular goods, viz. in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, one 'cannot find . . . any reference, however slight, to the appetitive tendencies that are inherent in human nature, much less an inventory of man's natural appetites that would enable us to ascertain the real goods at which they aim'.⁹ Quite so. The fact is that Aristotle is not a neo-Aristotelian who believes that ethical truths are attained by an inventory (or any other description) of aspects of human nature.

Henry Veatch, on the other hand, does not seek an inventory of the 'real goods'. But he does think that Aristotelian ethics turns on an identification of *the* good, the supreme good, of human life. And that identification, he insists, is made not in the ethics (which is a practical science) but in the physics, the great Aristotelian inquiry into the natures of the various kinds of substances in the natural world, including human nature. Ethics begins only *after* we 'as physicists'¹⁰ have identified the *telos* of human development.

Admirably clear. But rather mysterious, given that Aristotle's own inquiry into the *telos* of human existence is *the*

⁸ Adler, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁰ Henry Veatch, *Aristotle: a Contemporary Appreciation* (Indiana UP, Bloomington and London: 1974), p. 99.

subject-matter of the *Ethics*, notably Books I and X, in each of which Aristotle insists that what he is doing is practical, not theoretical.

I hasten to add that there is in the *Nicomachean Ethics* an argument of Aristotle's that has something of the 'theoretical', i.e. non-practical, character which Adler and Veatch make decisive for ethics. It occurs as one part of the famous argument about man's *ergon*, function or characteristic activity: *Nic. Eth.* I, 7: 1097b24-1098a20. (Veatch says that this argument is for Aristotle 'the way' to identify true *eudaimonia*; but in fact it is only one of many arguments employed by Aristotle in his search for that identification.) Aristotle's concern to identify the human function is treated with much more sympathy by contemporary philosophers than it was by the philosophers of the last few generations. But there is one part of it which is rightly found unacceptable, and that is the very part or moment which is unequivocally 'theoretical', non-practical; for the rest of the argument can be construed either as theoretical (as it is by Adler and Veatch) or as practical. The one purely theoretical moment of the argument is where Aristotle says we should be looking not merely for man's function or characteristic activity but, more narrowly, for man's *peculiar* characteristic activity, i.e. the function he does not share with any other being.

Life seems to belong even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be the life of perception, but *it* also seems to be shared even by the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains, then . . .¹¹

And so on.

But, *pace* Aristotle, we should not suppose that the most important characteristics of humanity are to be identified by identifying those that distinguish us from all other kinds of being. For one thing, the argument would lead to a conclusion which Aristotle does not want; for he wants all his arguments to support his view that the ultimate *telos* of man is *theoretical* contemplation; but contemplation is not peculiar to human beings; it is a characteristic which, on Aristotle's own account, we share with the gods. But the

¹¹ *Nic. Eth.* I, 7: 1097b34-1098a3 (trans. Ross).

main thing wrong with Aristotle's 'unique function' argument is simply that it adduces a bare fact (the alleged fact that we are unique in such and such a respect). Though this may be a fact of great significance for a description of the universe, it has no significance for practical understanding, i.e. for an understanding of what is *good* in human life. The argument is a piece of bare 'physics', from which nothing of this sort follows for ethics.

Indeed, Henry Veatch gives silent, perhaps unwilling, testimony in support of my objection. For, having quoted Aristotle's function argument, with its conclusion (as Veatch renders it) that the unique function and, therefore, ultimate goal of human life is 'the practical life of the rational part of man', he gives what amounts to his own argument for that conclusion. Remember, on Veatch's own account of method, this argument should be a piece of physics, of theoretical and not practical reasoning. You will observe how different it in fact is, and how much better it is for being different, i.e. for being practical, i.e. directly concerned with the good and the reasonable:

(1) . . . man's function, or man's perfection or full-development, does indeed consist in . . . his living in the manner of someone with knowledge and understanding, and (2) . . . it is just this end that all men do strive for and that is consequently the source of their true happiness and satisfaction. For as regards (1), *would we not all acknowledge that* however healthy or fully developed a human being might be in a narrowly physical or biological sense, and however well he might be provided for in his ordinary needs and desires, if in general he acted and behaved in a way that was no better than a fool, we should hardly say that such a person's existence was quite what we would consider to be a full or proper existence for a human being. Similarly, as regards (2), *imagine yourself in a situation where you would be offered all of the usual and perhaps unusual necessities and even goods of life . . . but at the price of . . . not having any genuine knowledge or understanding either of yourself or of the nature of things generally—that is to say, at the price of your not asking any questions . . . and so of your not really knowing the what or the why of anything. Would you settle for this?* Presumably not. But, then, is not Aristotle right in his insistence that the good or final cause of human life is precisely the intelligent life . . .?¹²

The argument appeared to set out, unpromisingly, by asking what 'all men do strive for', an ethically barren question of

¹² Op. cit., pp. 106-7, emphases added.

'physics'. And the question what is a 'full and proper existence for a human being' seemed to be being asked in a purely theoretical way. But as the argument unfolds, we can see that it *works*, i.e. induces understanding and knowledge of what is a full and proper human existence, precisely by getting you to 'imagine yourself in a situation where you would be . . .', and asking 'Would you settle for this?'

True, the argument gets you to acknowledge something which can indeed be expressed in a proposition about human nature. But it does this by getting you to consider a question which, though hypothetical, is none the less practical. (For the argument would work *in just the same way* if the question were not hypothetical but required of you a choice here and now between the alternative lives (forms of life); thus its being hypothetical does not remove its radically practical character.) Bare facts about the natural order, such as that all men do strive for such-and-such, and/or that strivings for that are peculiar to human beings, play no part whatsoever in this *argument* of Veatch's.

I.5 'Everyone would say . . .'

Nor, usually, do such facts about the natural order play a role in Aristotle's argument. As Adler had to admit, appeals to what is natural or universal or peculiar to one species are virtually absent from the *Ethics*. The 'function' argument is not the deep structure of Aristotle's ethical method; it is an erratic boulder. The whole argument of the *Ethics* concludes to a proposition about what is natural to man, in the sense of truly appropriate to and fulfilling for human beings; but that is the conclusion, or a way of expressing the conclusion, and the arguments for it are found elsewhere. Where?

Time and again Aristotle appeals to what 'everyone would say', or 'no one would say', or 'everyone (or no one . . .) would choose'. These appeals are not at all to be understood as claiming or presupposing that philosophical opinions are to be accepted or rejected according as they enjoy the support of the majority or the multitude; on the contrary, Aristotle says time and again that on questions such as 'What

is the good for man?' we do not have to defer to the opinions of the multitude.¹³

Still less is the ultimate goal of ethical inquiry an understanding of 'the structure of moral language', as some modern philosophers of ethics (or meta-ethics) would have it. No, the goal of ethical inquiry is identification of and participation in the true human good. The primary and, in my view, the proper function of those appeals to what we or others (or 'everyone') would say or choose is to *prompt* or *remind* us (the present participants in the inquiry) firstly, of our own and others' pre-philosophical experience, and secondly, of our own and others' practical and pre-philosophical grasp of good(s).

'We ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people not less than to demonstrations; for because experience has given them an eye they see aright'.¹⁴ And that just appreciation of the human situation is to be found crystallized in the language of praise and blame. But you and I, doing ethics, need to *appropriate* that just appreciation of the human situation. We make that appropriation, not by parroting common opinions, nor by appeals to the fact that most people agree with the opinion we are espousing, but by attending to precisely those aspects of our experience (or of the experience of others which their testimony makes accessible to us) of which our language serves as a reminder and in which human good(s) became or can now become intelligible to us.

The decisive moves in Aristotle's argument identifying the ultimate good(s) of human life are moves like these:

No one would choose to live with the intellect of a child throughout his life, however much he were to be pleased at the things that children are pleased at . . .¹⁵

(Observe that this is the principle tacitly appealed to, or exemplified, by the convincing part of Veatch's argument concerning the good of intelligent living. Indeed, in a parallel version of his argument to identify 'man's *telos*', Veatch makes the move explicitly and to clinch his argument: 'by

¹³ *Nic. Eth.* I, 4: 1095a22; 5: 1095b14-22; *Eud. Eth.* I, 4: 1214b35.

¹⁴ *Nic. Eth.* VI, 11: 1143b12-14.

¹⁵ *Nic. Eth.* X, 3: 1174a1-3; see also 6: 1176b22-3; *Eud. Eth.* I, 5: 1215b23-4.

and large no man in his senses would prefer the existence of a contented cow . . . to the existence of a human being with at least some understanding of what is going on'—for such understanding, or even the semblance of it, 'means more to a human being than anything else'.¹⁶ We shall meet this contention again when we experiment in thought with the 'experience machine': II.3.)

No-one chooses to possess the whole world if he has first to become someone else . . .; he wishes for this only on condition of being whatever he is . . .¹⁷

(This, too, we shall explore further in the context of the experience machine.)

No-one would choose the whole world on condition of being alone . . .¹⁸
No-one chooses *eudaimonia* for the sake of honour, pleasure, etc., nor as a means to anything whatever other than itself¹⁹

And so on.

In each case, the 'no one would . . .' is a reminder of human experience, including the experience (actual or vicarious) of Aristotle's own reader, you or me. It is a reminder too, of a pre-philosophic understanding of that experience, including notably the reader's own previous understanding. So the appeal is not to numbers. Nor, on the other hand, is it a mere dogmatic begging of the question. For the opinions in question are not recalled as being philosophical answers to the philosophical question in issue (the question of the true human good(s)). Rather, they are recalled as expressing an understanding of particular aspects of the matter—as a set of insights which, when recalled, assembled and brought to bear on the question, will help to justify a thesis that is philosophical not by being less practical but by being more *general*, more *systematic* in relating each relevant proposition to all the others, and thus, above all, more *explanatory*.

¹⁶ Henry Veatch, *Rational Man: a Modern Interpretation of Aristotelian Ethics* (Indiana UP, Bloomington and London: 1962), pp. 56-7.

¹⁷ *Nic. Eth.* IX, 4: 1166a19-22.

¹⁸ *Nic. Eth.* IX, 9: 1169b17 (trans. Ross). There are some doubts about the authenticity and proper translation of this passage. But see also VIII, 7: 1159a9-11.

¹⁹ *Nic. Eth.* I, 7: 1097b6.

I.6 *Some conclusions about 'good' and 'nature'*

Aristotle's effort was to identify and participate in that form (or set of forms) of human life that is really and supremely good, desirable, preferable—even if it turns out to be one which, if luck is against us, may involve us in suffering. And that effort should be ours, too, in doing ethics.

Now any thesis about what is in this sense supremely good for you or me, or any other human being, can helpfully be expressed in various sorts of ways. It can be expressed as a thesis about what a human being should do or be; or what it is the business (not necessarily the *peculiar* function) of a human being to do or be; or what fulfils a human being; or what fully actualizes the potentialities of human nature; or what is in keeping with human nature . . . These last formulae, referring explicitly to human nature, can thus be a way of expressing the conclusions of an openly evaluative, practical, ethical investigation. Such references to what is (humanly) natural *need* not be regarded as an appeal to, or expression of, some independent, 'value-free' investigation of the sort that Veatch would call (Aristotelian) physics, and that we might call general anthropology.

On the other hand, while agreeing with John McDowell in that conclusion, I cannot agree with him that 'such an explicit mention of human nature would be a sort of rhetorical flourish, added to a conclusion already complete without it.'²⁰ There is a legitimate, theoretical (non-practical) investigation and description of human nature, and it cannot be a satisfactory description unless it incorporates results *which cannot be obtained except by that practical pursuit that Aristotle called ethics*. In our theoretical descriptions of the nature of other types of beings, we have to be content with what we can discover by the use of rather 'external' techniques; and those techniques will doubtless tell us much about human beings, too. But why suppose that our techniques for developing a description of *human* nature are limited to those available for describing beings whose nature we do not share?

²⁰ McDowell, 'The Role of *Eudaimonia* in Aristotle's Ethics', in Amélie Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (U. California P., Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: 1980), p. 371 (cf. p. 375 n. 27).

As I have said, Aristotle did not suppose so. His only treatises on human nature are his *Ethics* and his *Politics*, i.e. his practical and unequivocally evaluative 'philosophy of human matters [*ta anthrōpina*], complete as far as possible'.²¹ And this is no literary accident. For a study of the nature of a being is, for Aristotle, a study of the potentialities or capacities of that being. And Aristotle has a methodological principle which contradicts Adler's view that human goods are to be understood by reference to an inventory of 'inherent' human desires. The order of explanatory understanding, for Aristotle, is just the opposite: potentialities or capacities are understood by understanding their corresponding acts (actualizations); and acts or actualizations are in turn to be understood by understanding their objects.²² Now the principal *objects* of human life (i.e. of our capacities and our activities) are precisely the concern of practical reason, i.e. of our thinking about what to do and be. They are the subject-matter of that disciplined inquiry which Aristotle named ethics, an inquiry which one pursues, if one pursues it fully, not merely to find out about a topic (human good, i.e. the forms of human flourishing), but to realize and participate in those object(ive)s, those forms of human flourishing, with all one's being, by all one's choices and dispositions.

In the 'ontological order', no doubt, 'the essence of the soul grounds the potencies, the potencies ground the acts, and the acts ground knowledge of objects'.²³ But if you ask how we come to know human essence or nature, the order will be that stated by Aristotle himself: one must first know the objects, and thus one can fully know the characteristic human acts, and *thus* the human potentialities, and *thus* the human essence or nature. And the object(ive)s of human acts are the intelligible goods that make sense to someone choosing what to do . . .

Epistemologically, (knowledge of) human nature is not 'the basis of ethics'; rather, ethics is an indispensable preliminary to a full and soundly based knowledge of human nature. What one can and should say about human nature,

²¹ *Nic. Eth.* X, 9: 1181b15.

²² *De Anima* II, 4: 415a16-21. See also Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 87, a. 3c; in *II De Anima*, lect. 6, nn. 304-8; in *III De Anima*, lect. 9, n. 803.

²³ Bernard Lonergan, *Collection* (Herder, New York: 1967), p. 153.

as the result of one's ethical inquiries, is not mere rhetorical addition; it finds a place in the sober and factual account of what it is to be a human being.

I am not for a moment saying that everything that we know about human nature comes from our ethical understanding. Nor am I saying that our ethical understanding can be acquired independently of all 'factual', descriptive, 'theoretical' knowledge; I am not proposing a kind of ethical 'intuitionism' . . . As I have said elsewhere:

There is thus a mutual though not quite symmetrical *interdependence* between the project of describing human affairs by way of theory and the project of evaluating human options with a view, at least remotely, to acting reasonably and well. The evaluations are in no way deduced from the descriptions . . .; but one whose knowledge of the facts of the human situation is very limited is unlikely to judge well in discerning the practical implications of the basic values [which indeed cannot be grasped at all without a knowledge of possibilities]. Equally, the descriptions are not deduced from the evaluations; but without the evaluations one cannot determine what descriptions are really illuminating and significant.²⁴

Ethics is not deduced or inferred from metaphysics or anthropology. But a mistaken metaphysics or anthropology will block one's reflective understanding of the way in which one participates in the human goods (particularly the good of practical reasonableness itself). If, for example, one supposes that reason is the slave of the passions, a mere instrument for efficiently sorting out and attaining wants that are simply given prior to all understanding (II.1-3), one will find no reason to give the requirements of practical reasonableness (III.4-6) their architectonic and conclusive force.

I have been exploring what Aristotle could have had in mind when he raised, as a central concern of ethics, the question whether the just, the right, the good, are matters of convention only or *physei*, grounded in *nature* (I.3 above). That should be construed, I said, as raising the question of the *objectivity* of ethical judgments.

That question is now still more urgent. For everything I have been saying supposes that the judgments about human good(s) and the truly worthwhile objects of human existence

²⁴ Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1980), abbreviated *NLNR*, below, p. 19; the bracketed insertion is from p. 77.

are objective judgments, judgments capable of being true regardless of our decisions or the conventions of our language or the customs of our communities. And I have not yet said much to show how our opinions about human good(s) need not be the slave of our desires, or of the desires embodied in the conventions of our culture. In the next chapter, I try to show just that. That will also help to show what the human good(s) consist in, and will begin my response to the three great questions of conduct (I.3), particularly the third: Am I to live just for agreeable experiences?

NOTES

I.1

Ethics, properly done, is done in order to act well . . . See Aristotle, *Nic. Eth.* I, 3: 1095a6; II, 1: 1103b27-9; X, 8: 1179a35-b4; read with VI, 4: 1140b3-6 ('in doing . . ., goodness of action [*eupraxia*] is in itself the goal'), and *Pol.* VII, 3: 1325b14-21. Also *Meta.* II, 1: 993b21; *Eud. Eth.* I, 5: 1216b19-25. Also John M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Harvard UP, Cambridge, Mass. and London: 1975), pp. 71, 111 (but the explication in n. 98 on p. 71 is not strong enough).

Transparency . . . See Roy Edgley, *Reason in Theory and Practice* (Hutchinson, London: 1969), p. 97 ('my own present thinking, in contrast to the thinking of others, is transparent in the sense that I cannot distinguish the question "Do I think that *p*?" from a question in which there is no essential reference to myself or my belief, namely "Is it the case that *p*?"', etc.); also pp. 127-30 (e.g. 'when someone is thinking or wondering whether to do *x*, the same transparency holds (and indeed, thinking that the thing to do is *x* is one form of thinking that *p*) . . . No one can distinguish his own question of what to do from his own question of what answer to give to that question', etc.). Expressions in the first person have special features, many of which are explored by G. E. M. Anscombe in defending her stark thesis that 'I' is not a name and is not an expression which *refers* at all: 'The First Person' in her *Collected Philosophical Papers*, vol. II, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Blackwell, Oxford: 1981), pp. 21-36. See III.5 below.

I.2

'*Ethics is not worthwhile*' is a self-refuting assertion . . . See Finnis, *NLNR*, pp. 73-5, 79-80.

Philippa Foot
Virtues and Vices
pp. 8-14

Practising virtue with ease?

Foot, Philippa. *Virtues and Vices*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002.



and still have all we need in order to distinguish arts or skills from virtues. If we think, for instance, of someone who deliberately makes a spelling mistake (perhaps when writing on the blackboard in order to explain this particular point) we see that this does not in any way count against his skill as a speller: 'I did it deliberately' rebuts an accusation of this kind. And what we can say without running into any difficulties is that there is no comparable rebuttal in the case of an accusation relating to lack of virtue. If a man acts unjustly or uncharitably, or in a cowardly or intemperate manner, 'I did it deliberately' cannot on any interpretation lead to exculpation. So, we may say, a virtue is not, like a skill or an art, a mere capacity: it must actually engage the will.

II

I shall now turn to another thesis about the virtues, which I might express by saying that they are *corrective*, each one standing at a point at which there is some temptation to be resisted or deficiency of motivation to be made good. As Aristotle put it, virtues are about what is difficult for men, and I want to see in what sense this is true, and then to consider a problem in Kant's moral philosophy in the light of what has been said.

Let us first think about courage and temperance. Aristotle and Aquinas contrasted these virtues with justice in the following respect. Justice was concerned with operations, and courage and temperance with passions.⁷ What they meant by this seems to have been, primarily, that the man of courage does not fear immoderately nor the man of temperance have immoderate desires for pleasure, and that there was no corresponding moderation of a passion implied in the idea of justice. This particular account of courage and temperance might be disputed on the ground that a man's courage is measured by his action and not by anything as uncontrollable as fear; and similarly that the temperate man who must on occasion refuse pleasures need not *desire* them any less than the intemperate man. Be that as it may (and something will be said about it later) it is obviously true that courage and temperance have to

do with particular springs of action as justice does not. Almost any desire can lead a man to act unjustly, not even excluding the desire to help a friend or to save a life, whereas a cowardly act must be motivated by fear or a desire for safety, and an act of intemperance by a desire for pleasure, perhaps even for a particular range of pleasures such as those of eating or drinking or sex. And now, going back to the idea of virtues as correctives, one may say that it is only because fear and the desire for pleasure often operate as temptations that courage and temperance exist as virtues at all. As things are we often want to run away not only where that is the right thing to do but also where we should stand firm; and we want pleasure not only where we should seek pleasure but also where we should not. If human nature had been different there would have been no need of a corrective disposition in either place, as fear and pleasure would have been good guides to conduct throughout life. So Aquinas says, about the passions

They may incite us to something against reason, and so we need a curb, which we name *temperance*. Or they may make us shirk a course of action dictated by reason, through fear of dangers or hardships. Then a person needs to be steadfast and not run away from what is right; and for this *courage* is named.⁸

As with courage and temperance so with many other virtues: there is, for instance, a virtue of industriousness only because idleness is a temptation; and of humility only because men tend to think too well of themselves. Hope is a virtue because despair too is a temptation; it might have been that no one cried that all was lost except where he could really see it to be so, and in this case there would have been no virtue of hope.

With virtues such as justice and charity it is a little different, because they correspond not to any particular desire or tendency that has to be kept in check but rather to a deficiency of motivation; and it is this that they must make good. If people were as much attached to the good of others as they are to their own good there would no more be a general virtue of benevolence than there is a general virtue of self-love. And if people cared about the rights of others as they care about their own rights no virtue of justice would be needed to look after the matter, and rules about such things as contracts and promises

would only need to be made public, like the rules of a game that everyone was eager to play.

On this view of the virtues and vices everything is seen to depend on what human nature is like, and the traditional catalogue of the two kinds of dispositions is not hard to understand. Nevertheless it may be defective, and anyone who accepts the thesis that I am putting forward will feel free to ask himself where the temptations and deficiencies that need correcting are really to be found. It is possible, for example, that the theory of human nature lying behind the traditional list of the virtues and vices puts too much emphasis on hedonistic and sensual impulses, and does not sufficiently take account of less straightforward inclinations such as the desire to be put upon and dissatisfied, or the unwillingness to accept good things as they come along.

It should now be clear why I said that virtues should be seen as correctives; and part of what is meant by saying that virtue is about things that are difficult for men should also have appeared. The further application of this idea is, however, controversial, and the following difficulty presents itself: that we both are and are not inclined to think that the harder a man finds it to act virtuously the more virtue he shows if he does act well. For on the one hand great virtue is needed where it is particularly hard to act virtuously; yet on the other it could be argued that difficulty in acting virtuously shows that the agent is imperfect in virtue: according to Aristotle, to take pleasure in virtuous action is the mark of true virtue, with the self-mastery of the one who finds virtue difficult only a second best. How then is this conflict to be decided? Who shows most courage, the one who wants to run away but does not, or the one who does not even want to run away? Who shows most charity, the one who finds it easy to make the good of others his object, or the one who finds it hard?

What is certain is that the thought that virtues are corrective does not constrain us to relate virtue to difficulty in each individual man. Since men in general find it hard to face great dangers or evils, and even small ones, we may count as courageous those few who without blindness or indifference are nevertheless fearless even in terrible circumstances. And when someone has a natural charity or generosity it is at least part of the

virtue that he has: if natural virtue cannot be the whole of virtue this is because a kindly or fearless disposition could be disastrous without justice and wisdom, and because these virtues have to be learned, not because natural virtue is too easily acquired. I have argued that the virtues can be seen as correctives in relation to human nature in general but not that each virtue must present a difficulty to each and every man.

Nevertheless many people feel strongly inclined to say that it is for moral effort that moral praise is to be bestowed, and that in proportion as a man finds it easy to be virtuous so much the less is he to be morally admired for his good actions. The dilemma can be resolved only when we stop talking about difficulties standing in the way of virtuous action as if they were of only one kind. The fact is that some kinds of difficulties do indeed provide an occasion for much virtue, but that others rather show that virtue is incomplete.

To illustrate this point I shall first consider an example of honest action. We may suppose for instance that a man has an opportunity to steal, in circumstances where stealing is not morally permissible, but that he refrains. And now let us ask our old question. For one man it is hard to refrain from stealing and for another man it is not: which shows the greater virtue in acting as he should? It is not difficult to see in this case that it makes all the difference whether the difficulty comes from circumstances, as that a man is poor, or that his theft is unlikely to be detected, or whether it comes from something that belongs to his own character. The fact that a man is *tempted* to steal is something about him that shows a certain lack of honesty: of the thoroughly honest man we say that it 'never entered his head', meaning that it was never a real possibility for him. But the fact that he is poor is something that makes the occasion more *tempting*, and difficulties of this kind make honest action all the more virtuous.

A similar distinction can be made between different obstacles standing in the way of charitable action. Some circumstances, as that great sacrifice is needed, or that the one to be helped is a rival, give an occasion on which a man's charity is severely tested. Yet in given circumstances of this kind it is the man who acts easily rather than the one who finds it hard who shows the most charity. Charity is a virtue of attachment, and

that sympathy for others which makes it easier to help them is part of the virtue itself.

These are fairly simple cases, but I am not supposing that it is always easy to say where the relevant distinction is to be drawn. What, for instance, should we say about the emotion of fear as an obstacle to action? Is a man more courageous if he fears much and nevertheless acts, or if he is relatively fearless? Several things must be said about this. In the first place it seems that the emotion of fear is not a necessary condition for the display of courage; in face of a great evil such as death or injury a man may show courage even if he does not tremble. On the other hand even irrational fears may give an occasion for courage: if someone suffers from claustrophobia or a dread of heights he may require courage to do that which would not be a courageous action for others. But not all fears belong from this point of view to the circumstances rather than to a man's character. For while we do not think of claustrophobia or a dread of heights as features of character, a general timorousness may be. Thus, although pathological fears are not the result of a man's choices and values some fears may be. The fears that count against a man's courage are those that we think he could overcome, and among them, in a special class, those that reflect the fact that he values safety too much.

In spite of problems such as these, which have certainly not all been solved, both the distinction between different kinds of obstacles to virtuous action and the general idea that virtues are correctives will be useful in resolving a difficulty in Kant's moral philosophy closely related to the issues discussed in the preceding paragraphs. In a passage in the first section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant notoriously tied himself into a knot in trying to give an account of those actions which have as he put it 'positive moral worth'. Arguing that only actions done out of a sense of duty have this worth he contrasts a philanthropist who 'takes pleasure in spreading happiness around him' with one who acts out of respect for duty, saying that the actions of the latter but not the former have moral worth. Much scorn has been poured on Kant for this curious doctrine, and indeed it does seem that something has gone wrong, but perhaps we are not in a position to scoff unless we can give our own account of the idea on which Kant

is working. After all it does seem that he is right in saying that some actions are in accordance with duty, and even required by duty, without being the subjects of moral praise, like those of the honest trader who deals honestly in a situation in which it is in his interest to do so.

It was this kind of example that drove Kant to his strange conclusion. He added another example, however, in discussing acts of self-preservation; these he said, while they normally have no positive moral worth, may have it when a man preserves his life not from inclination but without inclination and from a sense of duty. Is he not right in saying that acts of self-preservation normally have no moral significance but that they may have it, and how do we ourselves explain this fact?

To anyone who approaches this topic from a consideration of the virtues the solution readily suggests itself. Some actions are in accordance with virtue without requiring virtue for their performance, whereas others are both in accordance with virtue and such as to show possession of a virtue. So Kant's trader was dealing honestly in a situation in which the virtue of honesty is not required for honest dealing, and it is for this reason that his action did not have 'positive moral worth'. Similarly, the care that one ordinarily takes for one's life, as for instance on some ordinary morning in eating one's breakfast and keeping out of the way of a car on the road, is something for which no virtue is required. As we said earlier there is no general virtue of self-love as there is a virtue of benevolence or charity, because men are generally attached sufficiently to their own good. Nevertheless in special circumstances virtues such as temperance, courage, fortitude, and hope may be needed if someone is to preserve his life. Are these circumstances in which the preservation of one's own life is a duty? Sometimes it is so, for sometimes it is what is owed to others that should keep a man from destroying himself, and then he may act out of a sense of duty. But not all cases in which acts of self-preservation show virtue are like this. For a man may display each of the virtues just listed even where he does not do any harm to others if he kills himself or fails to preserve his life. And it is this that explains why there may be a moral aspect to suicide which does not depend on possible injury to other people. It is not that suicide is 'always wrong', whatever

that would mean, but that suicide is *sometimes* contrary to virtues such as courage and hope.

Let us now return to Kant's philanthropists, with the thought that it is action that is in accordance with virtue and also displays a virtue that has moral worth. We see at once that Kant's difficulties are avoided, and the happy philanthropist reinstated in the position which belongs to him. For charity is, as we said, a virtue of attachment as well as action, and the sympathy that makes it easier to act with charity is part of the virtue. The man who acts charitably out of a sense of duty is not to be undervalued, but it is the other who most shows virtue and therefore to the other that most moral worth is attributed. Only a detail of Kant's presentation of the case of the dutiful philanthropist tells on the other side. For what he actually said was that this man felt no sympathy and took no pleasure in the good of others because 'his mind was clouded by some sorrow of his own', and this is the kind of circumstance that increases the virtue that is needed if a man is to act well.

III

It was suggested above that an action with 'positive moral worth', or as we might say a positively good action, was to be seen as one which was in accordance with virtue, by which I mean contrary to no virtue, and moreover one for which a virtue was required. Nothing has so far been said about another case, excluded by the formula, in which it might seem that an act displaying one virtue was nevertheless contrary to another. In giving this last description I am thinking not of two virtues with competing claims, as if what were required by justice could nevertheless be demanded by charity, or something of that kind, but rather of the possibility that a virtue such as courage or temperance or industry which overcomes a special temptation, might be displayed in an act of folly or villainy. Is this something that we must allow for, or is it only good or innocent actions which can be acts of these virtues? Aquinas, in his definition of virtue, said that virtues can produce only good actions, and that they are dispositions

Josef Pieper

The Four Cardinal Virtues

pp. 122-125

Fortitude and its relation to prudence
and justice

Pieper, Josef.. *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1966.



2. *Fortitude Must Not Trust Itself*

IF THE SPECIFIC CHARACTER of fortitude consists in suffering injuries in the battle for the realization of the good, then the brave man must first know what the good is, and he must be brave for the sake of the good. "It is for the sake of the good that the brave man exposes himself to the danger of death." "In overcoming danger, fortitude seeks not danger itself, but the realization of rational good." "To take death upon oneself is not in itself praiseworthy, but solely because of its subordination to good." It is not the injury that matters primarily, but the realization of the good.

Therefore fortitude, though it puts man to the severest test, is not the first and greatest of the virtues. For neither difficulty nor effort causes virtue, but the good alone.

Fortitude therefore points to something prior. Essentially it is something secondary, subordinate, deriving its measure from something else. It has its place in a scale of meaning and value where it does not rank first. Fortitude is not independent, it does not stand by itself. It receives its proper significance only in relation to something other than itself.

"Fortitude must not trust itself," says Ambrose.

Every child knows that in the list of cardinal virtues fortitude comes third. This enumeration is not accidental: it is a meaningfully graded series.

Fortitude Must Not Trust Itself

Prudence and justice precede fortitude. And that means, categorically: without prudence, without justice, there is no fortitude; only he who is just and prudent can also be brave; to be really brave is quite impossible without at the same time being prudent and just also.

Nor is it possible to discuss the nature of fortitude without examining its relation to prudence and justice.

To begin with, only the prudent man can be brave. Fortitude without prudence is not fortitude.

The growing surprise we experience as we examine this proposition more closely marks the measure of our estrangement from the self-evident foundations of the classical teachings of the Church on human life. Only recently have we hesitantly begun to rediscover what is expressed in this proposition, namely, the proper place and the high rank that belong to prudence.

To mention fortitude and prudence in the same breath seems in a measure to contradict modern man's notion of prudence and also of fortitude. This is partially due to the fact that current usage does not designate quite the same thing by "prudence" as classical theology understood by *prudentialia* and *discretio*. The term "prudence" has come to mean rather the slyness which permits the cunning and "shrewd" tactician to evade any dangerous risk to his person, and thus escape injury and even the possibility of injury. To us, prudence seems to be that false "discretion" and "cool consideration" conjured up by the coward in order to be able to shirk the test. To "prudence" thus conceived, fortitude seems plainly unwise or stupid.

In truth, fortitude becomes fortitude only through being "informed" by prudence. The double meaning of "inform" is here very apt. "Inform" in the current usage means primarily "instruct"; secondly, as a technical term of scholasticism, taken directly from the Latin *informare*, it means "to give inner form

to." Referring to the relation between prudence and fortitude, the two meanings interlock: in the instruction of fortitude by prudence the former receives from the latter its inner form, that is, its specific character as a virtue.

The virtue of fortitude has nothing to do with a purely vital, blind, exuberant, daredevil spirit. (On the other hand it presupposes a healthy vitality, perhaps more than any other virtue.) The man who recklessly and indiscriminately courts any kind of danger is not for that reason brave; all he proves is that, without preliminary examination or distinction, he considers all manner of things more valuable than the personal intactness which he risks for their sake. The nature of fortitude is not determined by risking one's person arbitrarily, but only by a sacrifice of self in accordance with reason, that is, with the true nature and value of real things. "Not in any way whatsoever, but according to reason." Genuine fortitude presupposes a correct evaluation of things, of the things that one risks as well as of those which one hopes to preserve or gain by the risk.

Pericles, in the lofty words of his speech for the fallen heroes, expressed Christian wisdom also: "For this too is our way: to dare most liberally where we have reflected best. With others, only ignorance begets fortitude; and reflection but begets hesitation."

Prudence gives their inner form to all the other cardinal virtues: justice, fortitude, and temperance. But these three are not equally dependent upon prudence. Fortitude is less directly informed by prudence than justice; justice is the first word of prudence, fortitude the second; prudence informs fortitude, as it were, through justice. Justice is based solely upon the recognition of reality achieved by prudence; fortitude, however, is based upon prudence and justice together.

Thomas Aquinas gives the following explanation for the hier-

Fortitude Must Not Trust Itself

archy of the cardinal virtues: the actual good of man is his self-realization in accordance with reason, that is, in accordance with the truth of real things. (Let us keep in mind that for the classical theology of the Church, reason always and only means the "passage" to reality. We must avoid the temptation of transferring our justifiably contemptuous lack of confidence in the dictatorial "reason" of the idealist philosophers of the nineteenth century to the *ratio* of scholasticism, always closely related to reality.) The essence of this "good of reason" is conferred in the directive cognition of prudence. In the virtue of justice, this good of reason becomes transformed into actual existence. "It is the function of justice to carry out the order of reason in all human affairs." The other virtues—fortitude and temperance—serve the conservation of this good; it is their function to preserve man from declining from the good. Among these two latter virtues, fortitude takes precedence.

Under the direction of prudence, the good of man becomes compellingly evident. Justice primarily brings about the actual realization of this good. Fortitude therefore, by itself, is not the primary realization of the good. But fortitude protects this realization or clears the road for it.

So we cannot simply say that only the prudent man can be brave. We have further to see that a "fortitude" which is not subservient to justice is just as false and unreal as a "fortitude" which is not informed by prudence.

Without the "just cause" there is no fortitude. "Not the injury, but the cause makes martyrs," says St. Augustine. "Man does not expose his life to mortal danger, except to maintain justice. Therefore the praise of fortitude depends upon justice," says St. Thomas. And in his *Book of Duties*, St. Ambrose says: "Fortitude without justice is a lever of evil."

1 Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (*ethike*) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyreplayers by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

This is confirmed by what happens in states; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one.

Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; men will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but all men would have been born good or bad at their craft. This, then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and good-tempered, others self-indulgent and irascible, by behaving in one way or the other in the appropriate circumstances. Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.

Trans. W.D. Ross (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html>)

Servais Pinckaers

The Sources of Christian Ethics

pp. 328-341

Freedom of indifference

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Freedom is at the heart of our existence. It is at the core of our experience and is the source of our willing and acting. It is who we are, at our most personal. It would seem that there is nothing about ourselves that we are more aware of. To hear us speak of freedom, to hear us incessantly defending it, it would seem to be quite familiar to all as a birthright and inalienable possession.

And yet, when we question ourselves about the nature of human freedom, when we attempt to grasp, describe, and define it, it always escapes us. We are left clutching at traces and reflections. Freedom is always just beyond the horizon of our thoughts and actions. It is an amazing capacity for innovation and change, but also for destruction and contradiction.

Freedom is, therefore, what we know best, since it is at the heart of our most personal actions. At the same time, freedom is what we know least, for no idea can encompass it, no piling up of concepts reveal it adequately. The only possible definition, if there is one at all, would be to say that freedom always transcends the action it causes or the thought in which it is reflected.

Two Ways of Knowing Freedom

If it is vain to hope for an adequate definition of freedom, which will not fail by excess or by defect, still there are several fairly sure avenues of approach, which will lead us to recognize some of freedom's characteristics clearly enough to be able to use them in shaping moral theory.

The first and principal method is reflection on our actions and feelings, which are the direct results of our freedom. Regardless of cultural background, everyone is led, sooner or later, by experience and life's problems, to reflect on freedom and the moral realities it generates: responsibility, good and evil, virtue and duty, truth and falsehood, reward and punishment, and so forth. A candid glance at our own conduct leads us to the personal interiority where freedom resides. This search is a form of the self-knowledge recommended by Socrates as the very source of moral understanding.

There is, however, another way of discovering freedom, less immediate but very enlightening. It is provided for us by moral science and consists in the analysis of the development and structuring of moral theory from the point of view of a certain concept of freedom. As a tree bears fruit, freedom not only forms our personal actions but has produced through the centuries systems of moral theory which, in their structure, principal features, particularities, logic, and dynamics reveal freedom.

These two methods, reflection on our individual actions and on moral systems, are complementary and mutually enlightening. Books on moral theory express the author's freely formed thought, or that of a given period, together with moral experience, which is, in the end, always personal.

In studying the history of Catholic moral theology, we have observed the two broad types of organization of moral material. Moral theories based on the question of happiness and the virtues are characteristic of the patristic and great scholastic periods, while theories of obligation and commandments predominate in the modern era. In attempting to reconstruct and trace the internal logic animating these theories and ordering their elements, we are inevitably led, as to the tap root, to varying concepts of freedom. For morality of obligation, it is freedom of indifference; for moral systems based on happiness and virtue, it is what we call freedom for excellence. We note here a remarkable convergence of history and systems, indicating that a certain logic is imposed on the reflections of authors and has influenced the historical transmission of works and ideas. Thus it can be said that two different concepts of freedom have given rise to two different systematizations of moral theology.

Historically, the crucial and decisive moment came at the beginning of the fourteenth century when William of Ockham, in critiquing St. Thomas, worked out his new concept of freedom. But we would be wrong to see in this merely an isolated event, an error of far-off times, or a simple dispute between the Franciscan and Dominican schools. In his teaching on freedom and moral theory, St. Thomas was the faithful interpreter of the patristic tradition, which had nourished his thought and the Greek philosophy he exploited. Ockham, on the other hand, was the initiator of a certain concept of freedom and morality that would be adopted by many theologians and philosophers who came after him, even when they opposed or simply ignored nominalism.

The debate cannot be reduced to a confrontation between ancients and moderns, for, beyond ideas and books, the very exercise of freedom and the experience of action have maintained the coexistence of these two great currents of moral thought, one plunging underground when the other appears on the surface. Today we can still find them and recognize them in ourselves, in the depths of our consciousness and memory, if we are able to penetrate within. The present crisis in Christian ethics, with the upheavals it is causing, could actually be a favorable moment for bringing to the fore once again the doctrine of freedom for excellence, which seems to us richer and more adequate than freedom of indifference. Constant study of moralists—St. Thomas, Ockham, and

the rest—can be very revealing, offering us guides and models for our research. Ultimately, however, the question of freedom confronts us with a choice here and now that will be a determining factor in the coming renewal of Christian moral theology.

In our study we shall expound the two concepts, freedom of indifference and freedom for excellence, with their characteristic features, and we shall show the logic they engender in the forming of moral systems. We shall use the data provided by our historical research, developing and refining it, with apologies for any inevitable redundancy. But our perspective will be mainly systematic or architectonic: How was freedom conceived? How did the concept influence the elaboration of moral theory? Obviously we are working from our position within the Catholic tradition, but we shall frequently be in touch with modern philosophy, which also and more than we might suspect flows from the ideological currents that developed from the medieval period onward.

We shall begin with a study of freedom of indifference, even though it came later historically, because it is the most widespread concept today. It so fills the horizon of thought and experience that an approach to freedom for excellence necessitates a process of veritable rediscovery. We shall describe freedom of indifference first, therefore, with its characteristics and limitations. This done, we will be in a better position to understand by contrast the nature of freedom for excellence.

Historically our work presents a special difficulty in that neither St. Thomas nor the Fathers of the Church were acquainted with the nominalist concept of freedom, and therefore neither addressed it with the power and precision of a critical confrontation. So it is up to us to explore their concept of freedom for ourselves. Fortunately, human experience, which persists through varying intellectual debates, can provide us with all the data we need.

FREEDOM OF INDIFFERENCE

Two Interpretations of the Definition of Free Will

The line of demarcation between the two concepts of freedom we are studying is determined, historically and systematically, by the interpretation of the first part of the definition of free will bequeathed to Western theology by Peter Lombard: "Free will is that faculty of reason and will

whereby one chooses the good with the help of grace, or evil without this help."¹

The first part of this definition can be given two diametrically opposed interpretations. Basing his thought on the Aristotelian analysis of choice, St. Thomas explained freedom as a faculty *proceeding from* reason and will, which unite to make the act of choice. This act of choice is thus formed by practical judgment and willing. For him, free will was not a prime or originating faculty; it presupposed intelligence and will.² It was rooted, therefore, in the inclinations to truth and goodness that constituted these faculties.

Ockham, on the contrary, maintained that free will *preceded* reason and will in such a way as to move them to their acts. "For I can freely choose," he said, "to know or not to know, to will or not to will." For him, free will was the prime faculty, anterior to intelligence and will as well as to their acts.

This interpretation had already been formulated in the Franciscan school. St. Bonaventure reported it as a first opinion on the distinction among free will, reason, and will: "[Free will] is the power that commands the will and reason, rules them and moves them both; its first act is not discernment and willing but a reflective action upon them both, moving and ruling them, that is, the action expressed when we say we wish to discern and we wish to will. This act precedes reason and will, and its power corresponds to the Father, for his is the most powerful of acts and it is primary, not being moved, but moving."³

Being primary to such a degree, freedom clearly could not be demonstrated, since any reason advanced to prove it would include elements at least as doubtful and unknown as the conclusion drawn in its favor (Ockham, *Quodl.* I, q 16). Freedom was postulated as a first fact of human experience. It was affirmed that, whatever the decision dictated by reason, the will could follow it or not (*Quodl.* I, q 16).

In view of this experience, how could freedom be described? Freedom

1. "Liberum vero arbitrium est facultas rationis et voluntatis, qua bonum eligitur gratia assistente, vel malum eadem desistente" (In II *Sent.*, dist. 24 c. 3).

2. Cf. Ia q 83. This question, devoted to free will, is logically preceded by the study of the intellect, of reason (q 79), and of will (q 82).

3. "... et est virtus imperans rationi et voluntati et utramque regens et movens, cuius actus primus non est discernere et velle, sed actus reflexus; super haec duo et haec duo movens et regens, ille videlicet quo dicitur quis velle discernere vel velle se velle. Et iste actus praeambulus est ad rationem et voluntatem, et ista potentia correspondet Patri, pro eo quod actus eius maxime potens est et primus est, cum non moveatur, sed moveat" (In II *Sent.*, dist. 25, p 1, a 1, q 2).

lay entirely in the power of the will to choose between contraries, and this power resided in the will alone. It was the power to opt for the *yes* or the *no*, to choose between what reason dictated and its contrary, between willing and not willing, acting and not acting, between what the law prescribed and its contrary. Thus freedom consisted in an indetermination or a radical indifference in the will regarding contraries, in such a way that actions were produced in a wholly contingent way. As Gabriel Biel was to say, freedom was essentially the power to move in two opposite directions. It was qualified by an indifference to the opposites.

Thus understood, freedom was practically identified with the will, as the origin of willing and acting, as a power of self-determination. In this way it came to constitute, in some way, by itself alone, the very being of the person, at the source of all action. It was in this sense that Sartre could write: "My freedom is not an added quality or a property of my nature; it is the very stuff of my being."

The will issued from this interpretation transformed. It was no longer defined as an attraction toward the good, exercised in love and desire, as in St. Thomas and the Fathers. It became a radical indifference, whence proceeded a pure will, actually an imposition of will on itself or others, "a conscious pressure of self upon self," to use E. Mounier's definition. This was to become the modern understanding of will. Spiritual spontaneity was no longer first; it was overshadowed by the claims of freedom, achieved through indifference. As Nietzsche put it, "To will is to command obedience, or at the least apparent obedience."⁴ Willing was no longer characterized by love but by the relationship of command (*befehlen*) and obedience (*gehörchen*).

The Break with Natural Inclinations

The most decisive point of Ockham's critique of St. Thomas's teaching on freedom was the breach between freedom and the natural inclinations, which were rejected from the essential core of freedom. According to St. Thomas, freedom was rooted in the soul's spontaneous inclinations to the true and the good. His entire moral doctrine was based on the natural human disposition toward beatitude and the perfection of good, as to an ultimate end. A person can never renounce this natural order

4. "Ein Mensch der Will befiehlt einem Etwas in sich, das gehorcht oder von dem et glaubt, dass es gehorcht." *Beyond Good and Evil*, part n. 19.

of things, nor be prevented from desiring it. For Ockham, the state of being ordered to happiness, however natural and general, was subject to the free and contingent choice of human freedom. This meant that I could freely choose or refuse happiness, either in particular matters presented to me or in general, in the very desire which attracted me to it, owing to the radical indifference of my freedom.⁵ Similarly, I could choose to preserve my life or to loathe my existence. All natural inclinations, summed up in the inclination toward good or happiness, were thus subject to choice and to the will's free determination. It was as though they were uprooted from the will's depths, to be placed before it, beneath it, and subjected to its choice. They were no longer a part of the essence of freedom.

This displacement of inclinations contributed to a modification of their nature. Placed below freedom, they came to be regarded as impulses of a lower order, on the psychosomatic plane. In fact, the total concept of nature was being transformed. The harmony between humanity and nature was destroyed by a freedom that claimed to be "indifferent" to nature and defined itself as "non-nature." The consideration of the nature and spiritual spontaneity of the human person was banished from the horizons of thought. It is small wonder that the treatise on human happiness was so often struck out of the manuals of fundamental moral theology, and that this question was frequently omitted in philosophical studies.

We can note, too, the creation of a profound opposition between freedom and natural inclinations in moral systems based on the freedom of indifference, observable in modern thought. These inclinations appeared as the most insidious threat to the freedom and morality of actions, because they were interior and influenced us from within. This is doubtless the origin of the divorce between moral theory and the desire for happiness, which has been effected in our times.

The Break with the Philosophers and the Fathers

The separation effected by Ockham between freedom and natural inclinations touched all of ancient thought in depth, both philosophers and Fathers of the Church, through St. Thomas. This is very apparent when we study the disputes carried on between the great schools of antiquity, as described for example by Cicero in his *De finibus bonorum*

5. See Chapter 10, section "The Nominalist Revolution."

et malorum and his *De officiis*. We can easily discern the two principles that formed the common basis for discussions between Peripatetics, Stoics, Academicians, Epicurians and others.

There was first of all the famous principle *sequi naturam*, or conformity with nature, which must positively not be understood as a biological inclination, for it chiefly concerned rational nature, which was characterized by a longing for the enjoyment of the good, of truth, and of communication with others. All moral research had for its object the determination of what conformed to human nature: pleasure, the fulfillment of needs, various kinds of goods, virtue and so forth. The schools were distinguished by their different answers, depending on their concept of the human person, but all pronounced themselves in favor of the principle *sequi naturam*.

The second principle matched this. All moral discussion revolved around the question of "the happy life": In what did human happiness consist, and how was it to be attained? Happiness was the first desire of human nature as well as its perfection. If one followed nature, it was in order to obtain the happiness that nature itself proposed as the final end of human beings and their crowning achievement. There was no discussion on this point. All the divergencies sprang from the manner in which this universally human question was answered.

The Fathers of the Church were not content with adopting these philosophical principles. They deepened and intensified them in the light of Christian revelation. They saw in nature the direct work of God, the creator of Genesis, and the work of the Word of John's Gospel. To their minds, the following of nature harmonized with the scriptural following of God and of Christ; in this new light it became more personal. Thus we can understand St. Thomas's method, so foreign to us, his marked preference for examples taken from the physical order, even when explaining realities of the spiritual order. For him, God's action was manifested in a particularly luminous way in the movements of beings completely subject to nature, that is, to the divine rule, untroubled as they were by the intervention of an often-deficient freedom. We can therefore find in them our models for human action, providing always that we realize the role played by analogy.

As to the question of happiness, oriented to beatitude, our final end and perfection, it was always, beyond any doubt or discussion, the first moral question for the Fathers. But they found their answer in the Gospel, especially in St. Matthew's Beatitudes, which ordered our longing for happiness to the vision of God, through active faith in the word of Christ. The problematic was to be transformed. Thinking in regard to

happiness became more personal and more objective. Happiness no longer consisted, for the Fathers or St. Thomas, in merely human virtue as a subjective quality, but rather in openness to the divine goodness, to the reality of God himself, through love which came to us from God, through Christ.

It was true nonetheless that the entire tradition of the Fathers adopted and fully maintained the two principles of *sequi naturam* and the primal longing for happiness. Indeed, the tradition confirmed them by founding them in God.

It was precisely these basic principles, undisputed up to his time, that Ockham wrested from the heart of freedom and ranked as inferior to the choice of contraries. In so doing, he achieved a veritable rupture in the most profound depths of the human soul, on the level of principles, at the source of action. It should not, therefore, cause surprise that this "revolution" in the depths where activity rises should result in the upheaval of all moral ideas and their systematic organization.

Rejection of Sensibility

The relation between free will and human sensibility were to be similarly transformed. In his remarkable study of the passions (or sentiments), St. Thomas held that they could be good, could acquire a positive moral value. From the viewpoint of freedom of indifference, the passions first appeared as proceeding from a lower order and reducing the scope of freedom open to contraries. They next became a threat or obstacle to freedom. Doubtless, the will might use the impulse of the passions as an aid in performing actions, but it felt them mainly as a diminution of its freedom of choice.

It even seemed that freedom could find no better way of asserting itself than to struggle against sensibility. Indeed, the combat against an excess of passions is inevitable and necessary, but the idea took hold that moral valor could establish itself in no surer, clearer way than by going counter to sensibility. This was rigorism.

Rejection of *Habitus* and Virtues

St. Thomas had worked out a remarkable analysis of *habitus* and built his moral doctrine upon the foundation of the seven great theological and moral virtues. According to him, the virtues developed the natural

inclinations and brought them to perfection; they became like a second nature.

It was to be expected that, having banished natural inclinations from the heart of human freedom, nominalism would also dispense with *habitus* and virtues. The very idea of a *habitus* was opposed to freedom of indifference, for in a sense *habitus* took for granted the idea of a stable determination of actions. A *habitus* required the exercise of action in order to be formed, doubtless, but it preceded the actions issuing from it and deprived them of the complete latitude implied by the power to choose between contraries. The stronger a *habitus* grew, the more it influenced actions and the more it seemed to reduce freedom's scope. If total freedom was to be maintained, *habitus* must be removed from the level of freedom and placed below it. They would then become psychological mechanisms of a sort, created by repeated acts—or habitual procedures—which freedom could use as aids to further action. But one must always mistrust them, lest they acquire too much importance in the moral order and so diminish the free quality of actions. In this connection it is very significant that the translators of St. Thomas used *habitude* for *habitus*, without realizing the difference.⁶

Obviously, no Christian moral theory could dispense with giving the virtues their place; too many authorities treat of them. From the viewpoint of freedom of indifference, however, the concept of virtue was to be changed and reduced. For ethicists, virtue became simply a traditional, convenient category for listing moral obligations. Within the domain of freedom of indifference, there was no longer the need for virtue; in fact, the logical thing to do was to remove it. This is what the textbooks of moral theory did when they suppressed the treatise on virtues in fundamental moral theology and divided the subject matter of specialized moral theology according to the commandments rather than the virtues. There must surely have been many virtuous people at the time, but the concept of virtue was practically dead. Only the shadow remained.

The Break with Continuity and Finality; The Atomic Age of Moral Action

In banishing natural inclinations and virtues from the heart of freedom, nominalism broke the bonds that had united them with moral ac-

6. Cf. my book *Le Renouveau de la morale*, II, chap. 4, "La vertu est tout autre chose qu'une habitude" (Paris, 1964 and 1979), 144-64.

tion and had established them in a pattern of continuity ordered to finality. St. Thomas had considered human acts within the perspective of a final end, which would crown human happiness, and of the virtues, which would assure progress toward this end. Human acts were thus linked from within (from interior acts), to form an organic, permanent whole, where the present flowed from the past and opened onto the future.

Nominalism shattered this beautiful progression. If freedom consisted wholly in a choice between contraries, and was possessed sovereignly by our will alone, then each of our actions was held fixed in the instant of choice and separated from all the actions preceding or following it. Under pain of losing our freedom of indifference, we could not allow our past actions to determine an action of the present moment, nor could the latter have any bearing upon what we might do in the future. Freedom was thus caught and held captive in the present moment, which it created and cut off from past and future. Continuity was broken up into a succession of instants, like the perforated line made by an unthreaded sewing machine. Each moral action was forever isolated, like an island, an atom, a monad. Moral theology's atomic age was upon us.

Freedom of indifference was conceived as a given, in principle at least, from the first moment of conscious life. It could undoubtedly be limited by obstacles of all kinds, interior or exterior, or hampered in the performance of an action; but it was integral in its voluntary source and demonstrated this by its protest against all limitation. This type of freedom had no need to grow. Any increase that might be mentioned in its regard would refer to the diminution of exterior limitations that it succeeded in overcoming, not to any interior growth.

The vision of human life and moral theory was totally transformed. Free actions followed one upon another in a person's life without any bond of unity to weld them into a basic whole, as the vision of a last end or even personal sentiment might have done. The consideration of one's final end probably played its part as one weighed the morality of an action, but from this time on it was reduced to the dimensions of the one isolated action. The finality was short-term rather than long-term as St. Thomas had seen it. The end was no longer an essential part of the action; it became circumstantial, qualifying it from the outside. Personality, seen as the permanent substance underlying the flow of accidentals that it tended to unify, disappeared behind the aggregate of actions performed in isolated succession.

Let me quote a scholar who specialized in the study of Ockham. "If it is true that the essential note of personality is independence, and that

the human person's basic dignity lies in the power to act at any given moment in the way he chooses, then personality is something we cannot grasp. Only the successive, varying actions of the person matter. They are like small, isolated fruits, each with its own value. . . . What we call personality is no more than the laborious reconstruction of a jigsaw puzzle. Actions continue, each with its bizarre, uncoordinated contours. We try to classify them. None of this makes for unity and orientation. Human discontinuity is one of the basic tenets of Ockham's psychology, and this psychology leads directly to a moral system in which only actions are taken into consideration."⁷

The field of moral theory had been disrupted. It no longer dealt with the study of virtues but focused on isolated actions. Henceforth each action was studied in itself, according to the particular circumstances. In the seventeenth century this would be called the study of cases of conscience, whence the name casuistry.

The Passion for Freedom

Make no mistake: the demolition—and the word is chosen with precision—of St. Thomas's moral teaching by Ockham and the nominalists was no unfortunate accident, no regrettable error stemming from weakness of intellect and of moral concepts. We can see in it the direct, clearly deduced, and fully deliberate result of placing humanity in a central position. This was the core of freedom of indifference. Its results and manifestations might be negative, but they flowed from an initial determination to affirm freedom in the face of all else. Personality might disappear behind the disparate actions it generated, but the point of this was to concentrate on itself and to escape, through the very diversity and contrariety of successive actions, the traps they might lay for freedom.

Freedom of indifference was therefore not so neutral and serene as its name might indicate. It was a far cry from the *apatheia* sought by the Stoics and adopted by the Fathers of the Church in their own manner to designate a calm mastery over the passions. Beneath freedom of indifference lay hidden a primitive passion—we dare not call it natural: the human will to self-affirmation, to the assertion of a radical difference between itself and all else that existed.

7. G. de Lagarde, *La naissance de l'esprit laïque au déclin du moyen âge*, vol. 6, *L'individualisme ockhamiste* (Paris, 1946), 46–47.

This was the origin of the force and dynamism of this concept of freedom, regardless of how negative its results might be and how disruptive its manifestations. Freedom of indifference was first a defense of the human power to choose between contraries sheerly by its own volition. This autonomy included the rejection of all dependence whatsoever, and of any norm or law not made by itself. The power was most clearly evidenced in negation, in all its forms: refusal, criticism, contradiction, confrontation.

Such was the first characteristic manifestation of this sort of passion. It could be encapsulated in the formula, "against the positive and for the negative," or, in other words, an insistence on the freedom to take a negative stand, for this was the very heart of freedom. Freedom of indifference also expressed itself in being arbitrary for the sheer pleasure of it.

A sentence in Sartre's *Les Mots* clearly expresses this passion for freedom joined with fragmentation in time: "I become a traitor and I remain one. Useless to put my whole self into my undertakings, to give myself unreservedly to work, to anger, to friendship. The next minute I will deny myself. I know it, I wish it so, and I already betray myself passionately, anticipating my future betrayal with joy." One single passion has driven out all others: the passion for freedom, operating here through "betrayal."

Montherlant's passage in *The Young Girls* also merits quotation: "Costal's humanity did not lie in the fact that he could not feel human sentiments, but that, on the contrary, he could experience them all indifferently, at will, by pressing the appropriate button, so to speak. A limitless capriciousness rules human lives, some struggling in confrontation, others unaware of it. Costals was aware, and rather than suffer the consequences he preferred to worship it." Indifference and caprice are indeed typical notes of this kind of freedom; worship reveals the passion it can arouse.

Freedom of indifference was thus impregnated with a secret passion for self-affirmation, deeper than any of its manifestations and expressions. We might wonder, in this connection, whether Kantian rigorism, with its scrupulous demand for moral disinterestedness, might have been the result of a desperate effort to escape the fundamental self-interest that was the province of this concept of humanity and freedom.

Loyalties Reversed

As the quotation from Sartre would imply, there was a complete shift in loyalties. Loyalty, usually understood as the recognized bond between the will and a good, an ideal, a person, a way of life, an institution or a previous choice, insured the permanence of this will in a determined sense. Now its value shifted. Loyalty became a threat precisely because it was a bond, detrimental to the freedom of choice between contraries. Betrayal became the good thing, because it alone left the field open to the passion of self-affirmation.

Admittedly, things rarely came to such a pass. It would have been impossible to live one's life or to take one's place in society without retaining a minimum of continuity and loyalty. Many would retain interior faithfulness, but they would see it as repetitive, an adaptation renewed day by day, if not minute by minute, of a similar choice. This faithfulness would be only the semblance of continuity, constantly threatened from within by the temptation to affirm one's freedom by breaking away from it. At bottom, the only loyalty compatible with freedom of indifference was loyalty to oneself, expressed by refusing loyalty to everything but this very freedom. Thus loyalty became entirely subjective.

The Break between Freedom and Reason

We have reviewed successive ruptures effected by the concept of freedom of indifference: a breaking away from natural inclinations and sensibility, *habitus* and virtues, finality, continuity, and loyalty. All these ruptures meet in the final break between free will and reason.

For St. Thomas, freedom and will united to make a free choice. The coordination between the practical judgment and the voluntary decision was so intimate that they were scarcely distinguishable.

With Ockham this unity, beautiful and difficult to achieve, was necessarily and completely destroyed. If freedom consisted in the ability to choose between the *yes* and the *no*, it would have to affirm itself primarily against reason, against the "reasons" proposed for determining its choice and requiring of it a *yes*. Before the rigorous flow of reasons, freedom recoiled as if before prison bars. It escaped by way of negations, and it took refuge in the power to choose between contraries residing in pure will. Because of the ruptures mentioned above, reason no longer had a direct hold on freedom; it could not penetrate the will. No longer

could it say with any effect, If you wish to be happy, to live well, then be virtuous and loyal; for all the yearnings thus designated had now been subjected to the choice of contraries. Interior bonds of interpenetration between reason and will were no longer possible. Each faculty acted independently and did its own thing. Radical tension succeeded to the former effort toward harmony. Reason began to fabricate a universal determinism which enveloped the human person and led to the negation of freedom, while the will defended itself by setting itself up as the center of the universe, even to the point of pure caprice if need be. Freedom of indifference gave birth to twin forces forever at enmity, voluntarism and rationalism, which simultaneously attracted and repelled each other. From this time onward, authors, theologians, and philosophers would be either voluntarists or rationalists, particularly in moral theology.

It is true that the power to say *no* to reason had always been recognized as a part of human freedom. In question 6 of his *De malo*, dealing with freedom, St. Thomas had even admitted, at risk of a determinism through rational motives that provoked some objections to his theory, that the human person remained free to refuse beatitude, in general as well as in particular. But for him this was a weakness of human nature, like the possibility of demeaning oneself and falling captive to sin. According to the doctrine of freedom of indifference, on the contrary, the power to say no to reason itself was essential to freedom. Herein lay its force.

We should note here several important consequences for the concept of moral theology that stem from the divorce between reason and free will. Since morality is the proper domain of freedom, its main elements would be taken over by the will and would be ordered according to their relationships of power over various desires. Law, commandments, obedience, all that determined moral action, would flow henceforth from the will alone. The rational content of precepts would have no interest for us; we would be concerned no longer with understanding them, but only with knowing that they had been promulgated by an authority empowered to do so. Reason's role would be progressively limited to declaring that a precept existed in a given instance; no longer would it extend to research and comprehension. We would begin to distrust a reason which sought the why and wherefore of laws and commands.

The Absolute Freedom of God

We are familiar with freedom of indifference as a fact and a postulate of our human existence. For the nominalist theologian, however, it was

Robert Stern, 'The Expressions of Life: Does K.E. Loegstrup's Ethics Require a Concept of God?' (Extract)

The Character of the Radical Ethical Demand

Loegstrup speaks most prominently of a radical ethical demand in his first major work, *The Ethical Demand*, while in later writings from 1968 onwards he talks more about "sovereign expressions of life" - though, as we shall see, there are important connections between the two ideas.

Loegstrup introduces the idea of radical ethical demand by reflecting initially on the religious proclamation of Jesus - in particular, the commandment "to love thy neighbour as thyself." However, he says he wants to make sense of this in more than just theological terms, for:

"[if] the religious proclamation is not understandable in the sense that it answers to decisive features of our existence, then accepting it is tantamount to letting ourselves being imposed upon, either by others or by ourselves - for faith without understanding is not faith but coercion."

Thus, he writes later in the book reflecting on what he has achieved: "We took the proclamation of Jesus as the point of departure for our reflection on the ethical demand ... [and] we have tried [to account for it] in a purely human manner." As this suggests, Loegstrup's approach is to examine what ethical outlook is embodied in the love commandment by considering in more detail what it is to love the neighbour, and then to consider how to make sense of that commandment in terms of "decisive features of our existence," which include the metaphysical implications of taking it seriously.

At the outset, Loegstrup states that the "character of the demand contained in the proclamation of Jesus" is that it is "silent, radical, one-sided and unfulfillable," characteristics to which he then adds further related features - namely, that it is "invisible," "isolating" and that no one has a right to make it. All these characteristics set the ethical demand apart from conventional social demands and norms.

By claiming that the ethical demand is *silent*, Loegstrup means that it cannot be articulated in two fundamental respects: first, in responding to the needs of another person, you cannot just do whatever it is that they ask you to do, because that may not reflect their genuine needs; and, second, you cannot just appeal to established social norms and conventions, because there may not be any such norms and conventions governing the case, and even if there are, in the ethical situation it is up to you to take responsibility for how you decide to act, rather than just relying on such norms.

The ethical demand is thus *radical* in the sense that you must determine for yourself how to act and bear responsibility for it, as opposed to cases where one just follows prevailing conventions. As a result, Loegstrup argues, the demand *isolates* the individual on whom the demand falls, and makes them into "a singular person" because they cannot then submerge themselves in following these conventions or what the other person wants.

Robert Stern, 'The Expressions of Life: Does K.E. Loegstrup's Ethics Require a Concept of God?'

Loegstrup goes on to suggest that the demand is radical in the sense that it can only be fulfilled unselfishly and so may require us to act in ways that go *against* our own interests; this means that it may then "intrude disturbingly into my own existence," where we in general prefer to be left to just get on with our lives. At the same time, however, he rejects the idea that the demand is "limitless" and requires us to have "responsibility for everything under the sun".

Third, Loegstrup claims that the "radical character" of the demand "manifests itself also in the fact that the other person has no right themselves to make the demand, even though it has to do with the care of their own life." The demand is *one-sided*, he argues, in the sense that it does not involve reciprocity or the right to make "counter-demands," so that if I act for your good, this does not entitle me to ask for something in return.

Fourth, Loegstrup says that the demand is *unfulfillable*, but not in the sense that it is exorbitant and limitless, but in the sense that if it is felt *as a demand* and thus as something one is required to do, one has already failed as a moral agent. Genuinely to love the other is not to feel under any obligation to act on their behalf.

Finally, in addition to these central features of the demand, Loegstrup also mentions that the demand is *invisible* because Loegstrup thinks we can never be entirely sure if we have acted out of love for the other, or for more selfish or conventional motives, where this opacity applies not just to our understanding of others, but equally to ourselves.

Life as a Gift

Now, up to this point, Loegstrup can be read as simply "unpacking" the love commandment and the ethical demand it embodies, taking it for granted that the commandment corresponds to something many people see as a fundamental ethical norm, which Loegstrup summarizes as follows: "The radical demand says that the other's life should be cared for in a way that best serves the other." He thus takes himself to have brought out how this demand operates and what it asks of us, in ways that he hopes we will recognise and acknowledge.

But if we accept something like the radical ethical demand as characterised above, what are its broader metaphysical commitments? What "features of our existence" and view of the world do we need to take seriously in order to make sense of the ethical demand as Loegstrup has presented it?

One answer Loegstrup offers is relatively straightforward: that the love commandment and thus the ethical demand is only really intelligible given the fact that we are dependent on one another - otherwise, it would lose all normative force, as the need for care would not arise at all. Thus, the demand would not hold in a world in which "human beings were so independent of one another that the words and deeds of one were only a dispensable luxury in the life of another and my failure in the life of the neighbour could easily be made up later." But, of course, this is not the case - even though by falsely exaggerating our own autonomy and sovereignty we often overlook this fact, while we are also disturbed by the degree in which we hold the life of other people in our hands, and so try to ignore this dependence as much as we can.

Robert Stern, 'The Expressions of Life: Does K.E. Loegstrup's Ethics Require a Concept of God?'

As Loegstrup emphasizes, however, as soon as one thinks about such a basic phenomenon as *trust*, one sees immediately the extent to which we rely on others within a thoroughly social world, and that without this reliance we would not be the kind of creatures we are.

While this claim may be highly plausible, nonetheless Loegstrup thinks that more is required to make sense of the ethical demand. For, Loegstrup argues, a further metaphysical step is needed - namely, to accept that "life is a gift." This is the step that raises the question about creation with which I began: does conceiving life-as-a-gift necessarily involve conceiving life as something given by God, and if so how could this be made consistent with Loegstrup claim to be operating in a "purely human manner"? Or might it be understood in a way that does not require any appeal to the notion of a creator at all, in a form that is straightforwardly humanistic and secular?

Robert Stern ABC Religion and Ethics 8 Feb 2018

Recovered on 11th February 2018 <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2018/02/08/4800861.htm> where the whole article can be read.

Further Reading

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

- Easily available in several different translations and editions, this is probably the most important philosophical work ever written on ethics. Its take is very close to the one we will be adopting throughout this Sapiens Program. However it's not always easy reading: see bibliographical entry under "Vanier, Jean" for a very good introduction.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*.

- This monumental work of theology contains many philosophical nuggets in an Aristotelian vein, although it can be difficult at times to work out their relation to the over-arching concern which is that of Christian, revealed theology. Can be found online, e.g. at <https://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/> Worth dipping into, and rewarding if persevered with. Also see bibliographical entry under "Pieper, Joseph" for introductory works.

Finnis, John. *Fundamentals of Ethics*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 1983.

- Insightful if dense work that brings out the contrasts between the Aristotelian approach and other contemporary currents in ethical theory (utilitarianism, consequentialism...).

Foot, Philippa. *Virtues and Vices*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002.

- A stimulating and fairly accessible book representative of the resurgence of interest in "virtue ethics" among English and American philosophers in the second half of the twentieth century.

Kenny, Anthony. *A New History of Western Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006-7.

- Good introduction to the history of philosophy, with chapters on ethics in each volume. Some passages merit discussion.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*, 3rd ed., London, Bloomsbury, 2007.

- Wide-ranging and challenging work that claims that moral discourse is falling into ever-greater crisis in our society due to a lack of shared references. Essential reading to understand the relationship of our society to the classical tradition, but difficult.

Pieper, Josef. *Happiness and Contemplation*, South Bend, Indiana, Saint Augustine Press, 1998.

Id. *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, Notre Dame, Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1966.

- Pieper is a very accessible Thomistic philosopher. His books are easy to get hold of and give good bite-size ways of getting to know Aquinas from different topical points.

Pinckaers, Servais. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1995.

- This concentrates more on the history of moral theology, i.e. ethical reflection based on Christian revelation, but is very enlightening as to the way in which different theological perspectives influenced the development of contemporary secular ethics. Not less deep for being accessible.

Vanier, Jean. *Made for Happiness: Discovering the Meaning of Life with Aristotle*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001.

- An excellent and very accessible introduction to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, written by a philosopher with very practical credentials as living what he preaches.

Wang, Stephen. *Aquinas & Sartre. On Freedom Personal Identity, and the Possibility of Happiness*, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 2009.

- A thorough work that compares Aquinas and Sartre on three ethical topics, and argues for a greater proximity than one might think at first.



Who are the Brothers of St John?

Like the apostle John, living together as friends of Christ and witnessing to his light and his love.

We are religious, anchored in the tradition of the Church, living vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Our charism is characterised by communal prayer and fraternal charity, lived out in small priories. This religious setting is the source of the brothers' apostolic vitality, which is expressed in many different ways according to the requests of local bishops and the brothers' own creativity.

Our charism is lived concretely in our religious life through four essential pillars : prayer, fraternity, study and apostolic activity or mission.

We were founded in 1975 by the French Dominican Marie-Dominique Philippe, at the request of a group of his students who felt called to follow God in the ways he was indicating through his preaching and teaching.

The first priory of the Brothers of St John in the United Kingdom was founded in East London in 2008, in Canning Town. We moved to our current location in Forest Gate (E7) in 2012. There we minister to a large, multi-cultural parish as well as having ministries in central London. Among these are regular classes of philosophy, theology, spirituality and Church history in the Institute of St John, which meets weekly in Bayswater.

Our love for philosophy stems from a desire to convert our own intelligences to the truth we discover in God's world, in complementarity with that truth we receive directly from him in faith. It is also motivated by an intention to reach out to and dialogue with those who have yet to encounter Jesus.

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**BROTHERS OF
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Outline of the *Sapiens Program*

Ethics: Living the Examined Life

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|---|---|--------|
| 1 | The Rut: Why am I stuck - and can philosophy really help?
- <i>fr Philip-Thomas and br Michael-Paul</i> | Jan 17 |
| 2 | Awakening: What are my goals - and are they up to me?
- <i>fr Louis-Xavier and fr Philip-Thomas</i> | Jan 24 |
| 3 | Spring Cleaning: What needs to change in my behaviour?
- <i>br Michael-Paul</i> | Jan 31 |
| 4 | Progress Not Perfection: The journey ahead
- <i>fr Louis-Xavier</i> | Feb 7 |
| 5 | Free... For What?: The good life in today's world
- <i>fr Philip-Thomas</i> | Feb 14 |

We would like particularly to thank Fr Chris Vipers, parish priest of St Mary Moorfields, and Fr Andrew Chamiec for welcoming and greatly facilitating this Sapiens Program, and for all those who are helping with food.

