Ministry of Science and Higher Education

Moral Philosophy

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FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This material is prepared for the course 'Moral Philosophy'. As part of the social and political module, this course deals with the most important aspect of human lives namely the moral life.

At the heart of ethics there are two questions i) what should I do?, and ii) what sort of person should I be? Though philosophers sometimes proceed as if these questions were really quite distinct from one another, it's artificial to suppose that we can plausibly answer the one without making important commitments that go some ways towards answering the other. We can also, of course, ask about the status of our answers to these questions, by asking, for instance, whether such answers are in some way reflective only of personal opinion, or whether they might be best measured against some more objective standard.

We all have strong beliefs about right and wrong, good and bad. Moral philosophy, or ethics, is the business of justifying these beliefs. As philosophy students we can't say, for example: "We have to legalize abortion because women have the right to choose." We need to give reasons for why women have this right (or why they do not). We have to provide a basis for the whole concept of rights itself. This course will examine the different ways in which philosophers have attempted to carry out this project of justification.

Accordingly the first chapter deals with fundamental issues in moral philosophy beginning with the clarification of the notion 'moral philosophy' and further going deep into the distinction between normative and non-normative ethics.

Moral philosophers these days often regard ethical or moral theories as falling into one or another of the five main ethical frameworks or perspectives as to what one fundamentally ought to do. In the subsequent parts of the material we look at these frameworks and the philosophers who propounded these ideas. The first of these viz. virtue ethics is discussed under chapter two which also contains the moral philosophies of two of the representatives of this perspective (Plato and Aristotle).

The third chapter contains detailed discussionon consequentialism. Both egoism and utilitarianism are given sufficient space; under egoism four Greek and Roman schools of thought are presented, namely Cyrainisism, Cynicism, Epicureanism and Stoicism. The second part of this chapter gives us J. Bentham and J.S. Mill's conceptions of utilitarianism.

Under the fourth chapter we deal with various aspects of deontological ethics. These are divine command, Kant's duty-based ethics and finally W.D. Ross' prima facie duties. This chapter is supposed to direct us to the different ways in which objective moral standard may be envisaged.

Finally under chapter five we shall try to study the various challenges that morality has to grapple with. About five different ways in which the very possibility of morality can be questioned are given under this last chapter.

In conclusion it will be necessary to say few things concerning the organization of this material. While most of the materials consist of commentaries and analyses of the original works of the philosophers, there are few instances in which citations from the original works have been incorporated.

The latter part of the material consists both of bibliography and additional reading suggestions, hence the student is encouraged to try to put her hand in one or more of these materials should she require further guidance on some of the ideas discussed in it.

CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

1.1- What is Ethics/Moral Philosophy

Ethics is the study of what are good and bad ends to pursue in life and what is right and wrong to do in the conduct of life. It's therefore, above all, a practical discipline. Its primary aim is to determine how one ought to live and what actions one ought to do in the conduct of one's life. **(John Deigh)**

It's in short the philosophical study of moral judgments –value judgments about what is virtuous or base, just or unjust, morally right or wrong, morally good or bad or evil, morally proper or improper.

What is a moral judgment? How do we distinguish it from other judgments?

Every ethical question involves a decision about what one should do in a specific instance, not with what one would do. The choices that are implicated by our decisions imply the existence of a moral judgment. Every choice, in effect, involves an assessment of worth.

In general moral philosophy is the attempt to achieve a systematic understanding of the nature of morality and how we ought to live.

Ethical theorists attempt to do

1- The analysis and explanation of moral judgments and behavior
2- The investigation and clarification of the meanings of moral terms and statements.
3- The establishment of the validity of a set of norms or standards for the governing of behavior, an ideal of human character to be achieved, or ultimate goals to be striven for.

The more specific our statement of what ethical theory is, the more we find ourselves committed to a particular ethical theory. For instance to define ethics as the study of the conditions for human happiness would provide an appropriate description of ethics as it was conceived by Aristotle, but not as it was understood by Immanuel Kant. Or, conversely, if we portray ethics as the study of humanity's irrevocable duties, we will be characterizing Kant's theory adequately, but we would have a completely misleading notion of the ethics of Aristotle. Further, although the classical ethical theorists attempt to present systems of moral principles the reasons why they are valid, there are ethical theorists – the positivists, in particular- who deny the logical defensibility of such systems. Again, there are theorists who insist that those who attach great importance to the factual aspect of morality should be classified as social scientists and not as ethical theorists at all. And even on a point of general agreement, diversity may nevertheless persist. For example, although many ethical theorists agree that it's necessary to analyze the meaning of the language of morality, they use methods that vary so greatly as to produce striking different results.

In regard to the definition of ethics, as for many unresolved problems of ethical theory, the best appreciation of the meaning and importance of a problem comes from an examination of the various solutions that have been attempted. Each ethical theorist conceives of ethics in a personal way, and to obtain a truly meaningful conception of ethics, there is no substitute for acquaintance with the ethical theories themselves. From participating in the clashes of opinion, we shall discover that the challenge of ethics consists in the stimulation of its questions rather than in the finality of its answers. There is, moreover, the promise of the essential benefits of all philosophical controversy – the achievement of a measure of intellectual independence and maturity and a sense of security in dealing with abstract concepts. And for those who enter into the spirit of the philosophic enterprise, the traditions of ethics provide an adventure into a whole new range of ideas.

The primary subject of ethical investigation is included in the notion what is ultimately good or desirable for man.

The Development of Ethical Theory

The development of ethical theory in western civilization has been by the gradual accretion of insights, rather than by a systematic evolution in a straight line of progress. Two principal influences, divergent in origin and direction, have provided most of the conceptswith which ethical theorists in the western world deal.

1- THE GREEK TRADITION

This tradition conceived ethics as relating to the 'good life'; an inquiry directed towards discovering the nature of happiness. According to this tradition happiness is the ultimate goal towards which everything is directed though there are differences of opinion concerning the characteristics of the happiest life and the means for achieving it among the representatives.

Plato and Aristotle, the main figures in the Greek tradition have identified a universal standard by which we may judge actions as right or wrong.

2- The Judeo- Christian Tradition

This tradition has introduced a quite different orientation from the previous one. In this tradition the ideals of righteousness before God and the love of God and neighbor constitute the substances of morality. Duty and right are taken to be the primary ethical concepts. It attempts to reconcile doing what is right with being happy.

These two influences reflect a major cleavage between those theorists who regard duty and the right as the primary ethical concepts and those who view happiness and the good life as the fundamental concerns of ethics. If we make an effort to reconcile these diverse views, we are faced with the difficult task of defining the relationship between 'doing what is right' and 'being happy.'

The diverse traditions of the Greek and Judeo- Christian ethics, in combination with the many other historical and cultural factors operative in the formation of ideas, produce a multiplicity of systems in ethics. To the extent that ethical theory addresses itself to the problems current in the time of its formulation, it necessarily manifests this variety. History does not follow an orderly course in which one set of problematic situations is neatly solved and filed away before a new set of problems arises. The content of ethical theories, as a consequence, is largely a series of problems posed, solutions tendered, objections made, and replies attempted. The problems that occupy a generation may not be solved, yet fresh difficulties may demand to be treated; a German sage is reported to have observed that problems are never solved but are merely superseded by new ones. Even so, the very issues that have been put aside in favour of more pressing matters may reappear generations, or even centuries later to be considered afresh. Within anyone ethical theory, there is system, rational structure, and a high degree of definiteness, butthe history of ethical theory in the heterogeneous western tradition is markedly irregular, unsystematic, and unsettled. Ethics is, in consequence, all the richer and the more challenging.

1.2- ETHICS AND MORALS

It is important at the outset to distinguish between ethics and morals. The terms morals and ethics are closely related in their original meanings. The former comes from the Latin '*mores*', and the latter from the Greek '*ethos*.' Both mean "the custom or way of life." Modern usage of morality refers to conduct itself and ethics (or moral philosophy) to the study of moral conduct. We speak of "a moral act" and "an ethical code."

In common speech they are often used interchangeably, but in philosophy they have different connotations. Put briefly, ethics means the *theory* of right and wrong conduct; morals, its *practice.* It is more accurate to speak of ethical, rather than moral, principles; and of a moral, rather than ethical, way ofbehaviour. Ethics involves the values that a person seeks to express in a certain situation; morals, the way he sets about achieving this. Ethics takes the overall view; our morals bring us, so to speak, to the coal-face, where we are involved in the minutiae of behaviour.

It will not be difficult to think up many examples in daily usage which contradict this definition: people use the phrase 'moral principles', or 'ethical conduct'. But as a rule of thumb it should prove helpful when discussing the issues, and I express the hope that consistency on thismatter will be maintained. One can speak of medical ethics, but hardly of medical morals: here one would speak of a doctor's morals. Medical ethics concerns the general principles, such as the alleviation of suffering, which the profession tries, or should try, to observe; a doctor's morals refer to his own personal behaviour, and are more the concern of his friends and neighbours than of his patients. (A popular concept is that a person's morals mean primarily, if not exclusively, his sexual behaviour: while such behavior is, of course, included in this area, it is only one of the countless number of issues which are relevantly involved.)

The use of the negatives of the two words may help to clarify the distinction. Industrial espionage may be described as ‘unethical’ because it destroys any trust between two companies: it is a matter of business ethics. On the otherhand, a man who lets another person go to prison for a crime committed by himself would be adding a further act of immorality to that of the crime itself.

It may be noted in passing that there is a further opposite to the word moral: amoral. The difference between the two opposites is that while ‘immoral’ means ‘not observing a particular known moral rule’, ‘amoral’ means ‘not relevant to, or concerned with, morals’. One would not call a dog immoral for fouling a pavement (though one might so describe its owner if no steps were taken to prevent this), nor an infant for throwing his food on the floor. Only when they understand the difference between right and wrong behaviour can people be judged immoral. Thus the psychopath who does not understand this difference must be described as amoral rather than immoral.

Ethics, then, could be said to relate to morals as aims to objectives. A youth leader may state that his objective with a group of young people is to get them up a particular mountain; but his aim is to develop autonomy and self-confidence in them. So generally ethics is concerned with the principles of human behaviour, morals with the application of these principles in a particular situation.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF ETHICAL AND MORAL QUESTIONS

We must now turn to a consideration of the distinctive nature, assuming there is such, of these issues. In what way are they different from those raised within other disciplines, such as literature, or science?

(a) The first difference is that nobody can avoid them. It is possible, however unlikely or undesirable, to get through life without making any kind of literary judgment: never to reflect on who is one’s favourite author, or to consider the relative merits of, say, Agatha Christie and Edgar Allan Poe. Equally, one can proceed quite amicably along life’s highway without worrying about the age of the solar system, the causes of cancer, or how a car engine or television set works. One can experience an apparently full and satisfying life while still being illiterate or innumerate, knowing nothing about history and (like a student of mine in California who had never even heard of the Atlantic Ocean but seemed nonetheless perpetually radiant) even less about geography.

All of these issues we can avoid, along with many others; but nobody can get through life without ethics, even if he doesn’t know the meaning of the word. Consciously or unconsciously all of us are every day making moral decisions. Unless we are hermits (and even to become a hermit means making a moral decision) we meet other people: some we like, some we dislike,

while about many we know little and so have no opinion. All of them, however, impose themselves on our lives to a greater or lesser extent, even if it is only by poking an elbow in our ribs on the underground. This means that wehave to decide how to deal with them – whether to be friendly, or indifferent, or antipathetic towards them. How we speak to them will affect them; even a glance can mar or enhance another person's day. Whether we are aware of it or not, the fact is that we do have ethical attitudes and are taking moral stances every day of our lives. We can live without Shakespeare, or bacon, or the radio: we cannot live without other people. Even Robinson Crusoe on his desert island used tools made by others and knowledge received via others.

(b) This leads us to the second distinguishing factor about morals: other people are, however remotely, involved in these decisions. There is no such thing as private morality.

About most moral issues this is self-evident. The acts of lying, or stealing, or trafficking in drugs clearly involve others; so also does the attitude one takes towards the neighbours, donating to charity, or providing contraceptives to minors. But the same is true even about matters which, on the surface, seem to be of concern only to the individual agent. Let us take the example of smoking. Obviously, if I smoke in a public place I will affect others: they receive my tobacco smoke at second-hand and some are offended by this. But suppose I decide to smoke only in my shed, which serves as my study and into which nobody else is ever compelled to enter? Is this not then a totally private matter?

It is certainly more a private matter than is the habit of smoking in public; but I am still taking the risk of contracting lung cancer (or, in the case of my pipe, tongue or lip cancer); and this means that I am taking the risk of depriving others, for better or for worse, of my existence. Even if it could be proved that pipe-smoking is not injurious to health, this decision must still involve me – again, for better or for worse – in denying others of my company; in addition, I would still be paying out money on tobacco which could be spent in ways that would generally be considered more deserving. Even such apparently minor issues, morally speaking, as watching television instead of doing a chore, or buying a more expensive car than was originally planned, cannot be conducted in a vacuum. Whenever priorities have to be established regarding the use of one's time, abilities, or possessions, others, however remotely, will be affected.

(c) It follows from this that moral decisions matter: they affect the lives, the self-esteem, the happiness of others. This factor is shared by ethics with scientific, and, specifically, medical research. It matters to all of us that doctors and surgeons understand our ailments and can provide the remedies for them. Similarly, it matters that teachers understand the process in which they are engaged; few parents would be happy to discover that their children's teachers' chief aim was the dissemination of a certain religious or political viewpoint rather than the enhancement of learning. But in these other fields there are numerous factors which do not matter. It is, for example, ofconcern to me whether my doctor prescribes one form of antibiotic rather than another, or that my children are taught French primarily in a language laboratory

rather than through classroom interaction. In both these cases it is the end products – the recovery from illness, or the ability to speak a foreign language – which are the important issues. The difference with ethics and morals is that everything we do matters because everything we do is capable of affecting other people's lives.

Let us pursue this a little further. All of us are repelled, if not angered, by certain attitudes and qualities in other people. But what kind of attitudes or qualities? Can you imagine yourself refusing to speak again to a friend because he considered Hardy, rather than Dickens or Eliot, to be the greatest British nineteenth-century novelist? What sort of family would it be who divided over differences about the 'big bang' and 'steady state' theories concerning the origin of the universe? Have any life-long feuds been caused over disagreements about the strengths and weaknesses of action painting? Did any person ever refuse to speak again to another because one believed that St Paul's prison letters were written from Ephesus, the other, from Rome? Anyone who behaved like this would, quite literally, need his head examining.

Now switch the area of debate to moral issues and the difference becomes clear. I would not knowingly allow into my house either a drug pedlar or a supporter of apartheid in South Africa. Two sisters of my acquaintance ignored each other for twenty years – though they both lived in the same street – because of a difference of opinion over the character of their elder brother. There are people in a mining village in Wales today who do not speak to their next-door neighbours because they are grandchildren of 'scabs' in the miners' strike of 1926. These attitudes may be adjudged by some to be immature; but where ethical issues are involved, differences of opinion can cause divisions between people so deep that not even time can heal them.

(d) A fourth factor about these issues is one which helps to explain the intensity with which they are often discussed: there can never be a final solution in this field. We may debate the merits of capital punishment, nuclear disarmament or euthanasia until doomsday, but we shall never reach a definitive conclusion. Perhaps this is one reason why the philosopher is suspect to many members of the general public, who expect answers to their deepest, most searching questions. They look to ministers of religion for comfort in the presence of death, to doctors for the cure of disease, to lawyers when in legal trouble, and to social workers when facing family disorders. All these specialists make positive affirmations, even if they are sometimes wrong. What affirmations does the moral philosopher make? After all, he too faces searching questions. Is abortion morally acceptable? Should the smoking of pot be legalised? Should animals be bred for slaughter? Is adultery always wrong? Questions like these could fill a book, but the philosopher's reply to them must be equivocal: perhaps yes, perhaps no, yes and no, neither yesnor no, maybe . . .. His training will lead him not to make an ex cathedra adjudication on these issues, but to outline the principles involved where there is a moral dilemma, and to emphasise the need to be sure of the relevant facts of the situation: without facts there can be only prejudice. The individual concerned must then act in the way he thinks right. (If moral philosophers were called

out on strike, the cause would be settled long before they had concluded their debate on the ethics of striking.)

All this may (and, in fact, does) cause many people to be irritated with philosophers. For learned people to discuss the day-to-day issues which create human problems, yet apparently remain aloof, may well exasperate those seeking an answer. What we must accept is that this is how it is in philosophy. Speaking as a human being, as my friends know to their cost, I have opinions about almost every subject under the sun, and argue the case for them whenever the opportunity arises. Speaking as a philosopher, however, I can indicate only the rights and wrongs of both sides of an issue; and this remains the case even when discussing such apparently cut-and-dried matters as the Ku Klux Klan, the morality of war, the standpoint of the neo-fascists, or the use of assassination as a political weapon. None of these can be simply graded 'right' or 'wrong', as though one were marking a piece of French prose translation, or assessing a project on the circulation of blood.

Any criticisms of the moral philosopher on the grounds of his apparent pusillanimity, or lack of the courage of his convictions, should, however, be tempered by the realisation that he is not alone in his unwillingness or inability to come off the fence. The same is true in other fields: no literary expert can prove that Milton was a better poet than Donne; no historian that the Marxist interpretation of history is right; no physicist that the lineal view of time is wrong; no theologian that God exists. When you think about it, would it really be preferable that the situation were otherwise? In a world in which every one of its four billion inhabitants has a different experience of life, do we really desire a 'final solution' to any of these matters? Some of history's most dangerous people have been those appearing to have no shadow of a doubt about what is good or bad, right or wrong.

(e) The fifth distinctive feature of moral questions relates to the issue of choice: without choice morality cannot be involved. Here the main contrast to moral theory is that of science, where choice of opinion exists only in those areas where fuller knowledge has not yet been attained. (This is not to state that any law, however long established, will ever be held by the scientist to be beyond modification, but there are laws which have been tested so often that, for all practical purposes, their viability is not challenged. No scientist experiments merely on the 'probability' that gravity still operates, or that hydrochloric acid can still be attained from a mixture of salt and sulphuric acid.

Choice, then, is an element in any situation which the scientist must always be seeking to eliminate. In morals, choice is both essential and unavoidable; where no choice exists, no moral judgment can be made, and where it does exist, it cannot be escaped from.

Examples abound of people who, under extreme duress, behaved in ways which would normally have been condemned by society, but were exonerated because of the compulsion involved in their situations. The mother who smothered her baby rather than let it be tortured to death by the

Gestapo was not afterwards charged with infanticide. The survivors of an air crash at high altitude who ate their dead companions in order to remain alive were not accused of cannibalism. The total abstainer from alcohol who is dying of thirst would not be held morally blameworthy if he broke his vow because the only liquid available to him was alcoholic. Nobody who is given no choice as to how he behaves can be criticised on moral grounds.

But here we must pause, and I ask you to look again at the three examples just given. All the events, whether actual or hypothetical, took place under 'compulsion': there was, allegedly, no choice. But was this really the case? The mother could have chosen to take her own life rather than her baby's, the crash survivors to die rather than eat their dead companions, the abstainer to maintain his abstinence to the death. After all, devout Jehovah's Witnesses refuse, on religious grounds, to accept blood transfusions either for themselves or for their children, even when this is the only way of saving their lives. Is there not still a choice, even under duress? How compelling is compulsion? Adolf Eichmann, Commandant of an extermination camp for Jews, made the defence at his trial that what he did was under Hitler's orders, and that he would have been shot for refusing to act as he did. His Judges decided that that was a choice which had remained for him; and Eichmann was hanged.

Of course, it is, fortunately, not every day that we face such grave issues as these. The question remains, however, as to how far 'compulsion' is a legitimate excuse for behaviour which would otherwise be condemned. The 'professional foul' at football is defended on the grounds that the perpetrator 'has no choice'; but he does have a choice: he can accept the fact that his opponent has won the ball and is likely to score a goal. The workman who joins a union because otherwise he will be cold-shouldered by his colleagues, or doesn't join a union because otherwise his boss will sack him, may argue that he, too, has no choice; but he could choose to work in discomfort, or to be unemployed, rather than do what he, for the sake of the argument, feels to be wrong. The point here is not whether or not he is justified in his behaviour: that is a matter for his own conscience, and he must live with that. What is manifestly the case is that it is simply untrue to state that in this situation no choice is possible. 'Ought,' said Kant,)'implies can.' There must be few situations in life where the element of compulsion is so overwhelming that choice of any kind is impossible.

There is a fact about moral dilemmas which relates to this: choice is not only essential, but unavoidable. It may be argued that many people seem able to ignore such choices. This is certainly the case; but to ignore an issue is not to avoid it, as will be confirmed by many a broken-down motorist who has done nothing over a period of time about the unusual grating sound in his engine. (Hitler rose to power on the backs of people who looked away as Nazism grew in Germany.) By not getting involved in a moral issue we are still making a choice: non-commitment can, probably will, affect the outcome, in however small a way. I may argue that few people are likely to be affected by my views on a proposed new highway through a natural beauty spot, or the introduction of sex education or peace studies in my local school, or violence on television: but because these issues exist, I cannot avoid them. By choosing not to attend a

public meeting, or write to my MP or the TV authorities, I affect the ultimate outcome, whether I like it or not. To live at all is to take a moral stance: and that involves choice. Nobody can be neutral: many an election has been won or lost by the neutrals, or 'don't knows'. The priest who passed by on the other side was making his choice.

(f) This brings us to the sixth significant factor about moral issues, which concerns the nature of moral reasoning. While scientific reasoning (to take an example already used) aims to discover the truth, moral reasoning aims to discover the right forms of action; like the reasoning involved in say, political or educational theorising, it relates directly to the way people behave, or should behave. It is, in brief, an example of practical reasoning or, to use the title of a journal relating to this field, of applied philosophy.

When a scientist observes certain phenomena hitherto unexplained, his basic question is, why does this occur? Thenceforward, every experiment he conducts in this area will have as its objective the attempt to answer that question. He will feel satisfied only when he can declare 'this is true': and only then is he likely to divulge to others the results of his research. For him, as for the engineer, the physician, or the lawyer, there can be no acceptance of grey areas or ambiguities; every statement must ultimately be verifiable in accordance with accepted standards. The truth, however laboriously discovered, must out.

The problem in the field of morals is, as we have seen, that, because there is no agreed plan, or chart, or table, by reference to which a decision can be reached, no moral statement can be declared unequivocally to be 'true or 'false'. (As we shall see in Chapter Six, Jeremy Bentham produced a paradigm which he believed would enable people to make moral decisions on utilitarian lines, but few people take his proposals seriously.) Yet the irony of the situation, so far as the student of moral philosophy isconcerned, is that, while no definitive statement on moral issues can be made, action of some sort is demanded. In the debate on abortion, for instance, it can be readily acknowledged that on both sides deep-seated principles are held; and whatever is allowed in this field by law must offend one of the groups of protagonists. But action of some kind is absolutely necessary: the law, as we have seen, must either make provision for abortion, or disallow it. It cannot just do nothing about the matter.

What, then, can the moral philosopher say about this? He cannot, like the scientist, stand up (either in his bath or at a press conference) and cry: 'Eureka!' All he can do is to urge, if not insist, that the debate be conducted with logical consistency, intellectual honesty, and a catholic comprehension of the relevant facts. This may not sound earth-shattering, but in a world in which many crucial debates, such as on capital punishment, the treatment of football hooligans or inner-city rioters, or experiments on animals, are conducted in an atmosphere of heat rather than light, this contribution must be necessary, even if not sufficient, for the achievement of a wise conclusion, rather than one based on prejudice, emotion, or fear.

However much philosophy generally can be conducted from the ivory tower, the study of moral philosophy brings the student into the marketplace, even if he doesn't always dirty his shoes.

1.3- Normative and Non-normative Ethics

I- Normative Ethics

Implies appeal to a moral standard or 'norm' in making moral judgment. It involves an attempt to determine precisely what moral standards to follow so that our actions may be morally right or good. It includesapplied and general ethics.

Applied Ethics

It is the attempt to explain and justify positions on specific moral problems. It refers to the philosophical examination, from a moral standpoint, of particular problems in private and public life that are matters of moral judgment. It's called applied because the ethicist applies or uses general ethical principles in an attempt to resolve specific moral problems.

There is no consensus regarding the meaning of the term "applied ethics." Some people hold that applied ethics involves methods of enforcing ethics. Others view it as a kind of ethics that is used up over a periodof time. In academic circles, however, there is an increasing tendency to view applied ethics as the large body of codes that define desirable action and are required to conduct normal human affairs. These codes may produce rules that come to be regarded as formal, legal ethics.

Every kind of ethics has been applied at one time or another. A prehistoric cave dweller, for example, who hit his wife or child with a club and afterward felt sorry and vowed to refrain from beating members of his family was developing an applied ethic. Such a rule remained in the realm of applied ethics until some prophet wrote it down or until a chieftain or legislative body adopted it as a law.

Many varieties of ethics have developed by themselves. As modern civilization developed, new applied ethics were developed for specific vocations or specific households. When Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she helped many men and women to understand that slavery was unethical because of its effects on men, women, and children; in doing so, she introduced an applied ethic. Later, a constitutional amendment changed this applied ethicto a permanent, legal ethic.

In the United States, many professional and vocational groups have established rules for conducting business. The rules that they devised probably grew out of applied ethics. Groups endeavor to secure in their work certain rules that initially do not have the force of law but can certainly be described as applied ethics. These ethics are used as the basis for determining which rules should become rules of law.

General Normative Ethics

It is the reasoned search for principles of human conduct, including a critical study of the major theories about which things are good, which acts are right, and which are acts are blameworthy. It involves the attempt to determine exactly what moral standards to follow so that our actions may be morally right or good. General normative ethics tries to come up with and defend a system of basic ethical principle which is supposed to be valid objectively- it ensues from the common assumption that ethical actions spring from some standard. Generally speaking two broad categories of general normative ethics may be identified- Teleological and Deontological. These theories shall be discussed in as much detail as is necessary in the subsequent chapters.

II- Non-normative Ethics

It consists of either a factual investigation of moral behavior or an analysis of the meaning of the terms used in moral discourse and an examination of the moral reasoning by which moral beliefs can be shown to be true or false. It comprises of two subfields: scientific or descriptive and meta-ethics.

1- **Scientific/Descriptive Ethics**-refers to the factual investigation of moral behavior. It's concerned with how people actually behave. The report on how moral attitudes and codes differ from society to society, investigating and describing the values and behaviours of different societies.

This description of a marked difference in societies' values and in their conceptions of right and wrong has led many to advance the doctrine of ethical relativism.

2- **Meta-Ethics-** is the investigation of the meaning of ethical terms, including a critical study of how ethical statements can be verified.

Meta-ethical theories are meant to explain moral psychology, moral reality, and moral reason. Moral psychology considers the actual moral judgments, moral interests, and moral motivation people experience. Moral reality refers to the nature behind true moral statements—what makes our statements true. Moral reason describes our moral knowledge and how we can decide which moral beliefs are best or "most likely true." Moral realists believe that there are moral facts (moral elements of reality) and they are often optimistic about how well we can understand such facts, but moral anti-realists reject moral realism and don't think we need moral facts to understand morality. I will briefly discuss three meta-ethical theories, two of which are forms of moral realism and one that is a form of moral anti-realism: Moral naturalism and moral intuitionism are both forms of moral realism; noncognitivism/emotivism is a form of moral antirealism. There are many forms of each of these theories, but I will concentrate on one version of each theory.

Moral naturalism

Moral naturalismstates that moral facts are ordinary facts of the same physical reality described by scientists (biology, psychology, and physics), and we know about these facts through observation. Many naturalists think that we can observe moral facts because they are identical to other natural facts. For example, pain and intrinsic badness could be identical—two ways to see the same thing. Philosophers argue that scientists discovered that water and H2O are identical and we can discover that pain and intrinsic badness are the same thing in a similar way. Many philosophers think that morality supervenes on the natural world in the sense that moral facts depend on natural facts, so our observations about the natural world are relevant to morality. Two identical physical states of affairs will have identical moral implications. Two different situations of children torturing cats for fun will both be examples of something morally wrong because the natural facts are sufficiently analogous. Many moral naturalists equate "natural" with "nonmoral," but it's also possible that moral facts are a subclass of natural facts, just like most philosophers now think that psychological facts are natural facts rather than "over and above" natural facts. Many moral naturalists who agree that moral facts can be a subclass of natural facts think we can observe that pain is intrinsically bad just like we can observe our beliefs and desires. Pain is not necessarily identical to intrinsic badness because pain could have a property of being intrinsically bad instead.

Objections

1. The open question argument. – How do we know when two facts are identical? It's not obvious that pain and "intrinsic badness" are identical because they seem so different. The open question argument makes it clear that no matter what identity relation is offered, we can ask, "But are they identical?" For example, we can say intrinsic badness and pain are identical, and I can feel pain and ask, "But is this pain intrinsically bad?" If no good answer is offered, then such questions imply that moral identity relations are hypotheses at best and have not been proven true.

2. Moral observation is unreliable. – Many people question ourability to observe moral facts. First, many such observationsseem presumptuous, such as the observation that torturing a catis wrong from seeing it occur. It might merely be our moralassumptions that are needed to explain such an observation.

Additionally, moral observations are subjective because noteveryone has the same moral observations.

Moral Intuitionism

Moral intuitionists(also known as "moral non-naturalists") think thatobservation is insufficient to explain all of our moral knowledge and atleast some of our moral knowledge is based on intuition orcontemplation that enables us to know self-evident facts. Once wefully understand a moral statement, that can be enough to know if it'strue. For example, it might be self-evident that all pain is intrinsicallybad to anyone who fully understands what "pain" and "intrinsicallybad"

refer to. This is much like our knowledge of mathematics andlogic. We can know that “2+2=4” just by understanding what thestatement is saying.

Moral intuitionists don't necessarily think moral facts are naturalbecause they don't think we can know all moral facts throughobservation of the natural world. They tend to disagree that moralacts are identical to natural facts.

Objections

1. Intuition is unreliable. – Many people have different intuitionsand declare different moral beliefs to be “self-evident.” It's notobvious that we can resolve this disagreement or that intuition isanything other than prejudice.
2. Non-natural facts are farfetched. – Philosophers would preferfor all facts to be part of the natural world and it seemsmysterious to say that some facts aren't. Additionally, it's notobvious that there are “non-natural moral facts” in the firstplace.

Emotivism

Emotivismis a form of “non-cognitivism” because it claims that moraljudgments aren't ultimately meant to be true or false. Instead, moraljudgments are expressions of our emotions and moral arguments aremeant to change someone's emotional attitudes towards certain moral judgments. Not everything we say is true or false, such as “Wow!” or“Do your job!” Emotivists admit that moral judgments often soundlike they are assertions, but that is deceptive. They are actually justemotional displays. Saying “Killing indiscriminately is wrong” isactually expressing something like, “Killing indiscriminately, boo!”Emotivists don't believe in moral facts or true moral statements, butsome emotivists do believe that we can have a conversation involving“fictional” moral ideas that we treat as true for practical purposes.Saying what's right or wrong might help us agree upon what laws topass and what social contract would best satisfy our interests. Somepeople call this “fictionalism” or “constructivism.”

Objections

1. Emotivism is counterintuitive. – It seems highly counterintuitiveto tell me that when I engage in arguments concerning moralitythat I was doing something totally different than I thought.Emotivism is very dismissive of our moral experiences andconscious intentions.

2. Emotivism ignores rational moral arguments. – If moralarguments were merely meant to change our emotions, then whydo so many moral arguments seem rational? It's not obvious thatan emotivist can fully explain why rational moral arguments areso important to so many people.

CHAPTER TWO: VITRUE ETHICS

2.1- Virtue Ethics: The Whole Picture

A virtue is a state or disposition of a person. This is a reasonable intuitive claim; if someone is generous, say, then he has a character of a certain sort; he is dispositionally, that is, habitually and reliably, generous. A virtue, though, is not a habit in the sense in which habits can be mindless, sources of action in the agent that bypass her practical reasoning. A virtue is a disposition to act, not an entity built up within me and productive of behavior; it is my disposition to act in certain ways and not others. A virtue, unlike a mere habit, is a disposition to act for reasons, and so a disposition that is exercised through the agent's practical reasoning; it is built up by making choices and exercised in the making of further choices. When an honest person decides not to take something to which he is not entitled, this is not the upshot of a causal buildup from previous actions but a decision, a choice that endorses his disposition to be honest.The exercise of the agent's practical reasoning is thus essential to the way a virtue is both built up and exercised. Because of this feature, classical virtue ethics has been criticized as being overly intellectualist (even "elitist") on this basis.

However, the reasoning in question is just what everyone does, so it is hard to see how a theory that appeals to what is available to everyone is elitist. Different virtue theories offer us differing ways of making our reflections more theoretically sophisticated, but virtue ethics tries to improve the reasoning we all share, rather than replacing it by a different kind.

What is the role of the agent's practical reasoning? Virtue is the disposition to do the right thing for the right reason, in the appropriate way—honestly, courageously, and so on. This involves two aspects, the affective and the intellectual.

What is the affective aspect of virtue? The agent may do the right thing and have a variety of feelings and reactions to it. he may hate doing the right thing but do it anyway; do the right thing but with conflicted feelings or with difficulty; do the right thing effortlessly and with no internal opposition. One feature of the classical version of virtue ethics is to regard doing the right thing with no contraryinclination as a mark of the virtuous person, as opposed to the merely selfcontrolled. Mere performance of the right action still leaves open the issue of theagent's overall attitude; virtue requires doing the right thing for the right reasonwithout serious internal opposition, as a matter of character. This is, after all, justone implication of the thought that in an ethics of virtue it matters what kind ofperson you are. Of course, what it takes to develop your character in such a waythat you are wholehearted about being generous, act fairly without regrets, andso on is a large matter. There is no single unified theory of our affective naturethat all virtue theories share, and so there is a variety of views as to how we areto become virtuous, rather than merely doing the right thing for the right reason.

All theories in the classical tradition, however, accept and emphasize the point,familiar from common sense, that there is an important moral difference betweenthe person who merely acts

rightly and the person who is wholehearted in whathe does. Some modern theories implicitly deny the importance of this distinction,without giving a reason for this.The virtuous agent, then, does the right thing, undividedly, for the rightreason—he understands, that is, that this is the right thing to do. What is thisunderstanding? In classical virtue ethics, we start our moral education by learningfrom others, both in making particular judgments about right and wrong, and inadopting some people as role models or teachers or following certain rules. Atfirst, as pupils, we adopt these views because we were told to, or they seemedobvious, and we acquire a collection of moral views that are fragmented andaccepted on the authority of others. For virtue ethics, the purpose of good moraleducation is to get the pupil to think for himself about the reasons on which heacts, and so the content of what he has been taught. Ideally, then, the learner willbegin to reflect for himself on what he has accepted, will detect and deal withinconsistencies, and will try to make his judgments and practice coherent in termsof a wider understanding which enables him to unify, explain and justify theparticular decisions he makes. This is a process that requires the agent at everystage to use his mind, to think about what he is doing and to try to achieveunderstanding of it.

We can see this from an example. In many modern societies, the obviousmodels for courage are macho ones focusing on sports and war movies. A boymay grow up thinking that these are the paradigmatic contexts for courage, andhave various views about courage and cowardice that presuppose this. But if hereflects about the matter, he may come to think that he is also prepared to callpeople in other, quite different contexts brave—a child struggling with cancer,someone standing up for an unpopular person in high school, and so on. Furtherreflection will show that the macho grasp of courage was inadequate, and willdrive him to ask what links all these very diverse cases of bravery; this will leadhim to ask what the reasons are on which brave people act, rather than to continue uncritically with the views and attitudes he initially found obvious.

The development of ethical understanding, leading the agent to develop adisposition that is a virtue, is in the classical tradition standardly taken to proceedlike the acquisition of a practical skill or expertise. As Aristotle says, becomingjust is like becoming a builder. With a practical skill, there is something to learn,something conveyable by teaching; the expert is the person who understandsthrough reflection what she has been taught, and thinks for herself about it. Weare familiar with the notion of practical expertise in mundane contexts like thatof car repair, plumbing, and so on. In the classical tradition of virtue ethics, thisis an important analogy, because ethical development displays something that wecan see more clearly in these more limited contexts: There is a progress from themechanical rule- or model-following of the learner to the greater understandingof the expert, whose responses are sensitive to the particularities of situations, aswell as expressing learning and general reflection.

The skill analogy brings out two important points about ethical understanding: It requires both that you learn from others and that you come to think andunderstand for yourself. (The all-important progress from the learner to theexpert is lost in the modern tendency to reduce all practical knowledge to ‘knowing how’, as opposed to ‘knowing that’.) Ethical reflection begins

from what youhave learned in your society; but it requires you to progress from that. Virtuebegins from following rules or models in your social and cultural context; but itrequires that you develop a disposition to decide and act that involves the kindof understanding that only you can achieve in your own case.

Virtue is like a skill in its structure. But the skill analogy, of course, has limits.One is that practical skills are devoted to achieving ends from which we can detachourselves if we cease to want them, whereas virtue is devoted to achieving ourfinal end, which is not in this way an end we can just cease towant. Another limit is that the development of practical understanding in a skillcan be relatively independent of emotion and feeling, whereas the developmentof practical understanding goes along with a development in the virtuous person'saffect and response.

Some modern theorists have difficulty grasping the role of practical reasoningin the classical version of virtue ethics because it offends against a common modern dogma to the effect that reason functions only instrumentally, to fulfill whatever desires we happen to have. The issue is too large to discuss here, but it isimportant to notice that the classical theory of practical reasoning is a theoreticalrival to this account, so that assuming it against the classical version of virtueethics is begging the question. (One of the most interesting and fruitful moderndebates in ethics is opening up the question of the tenability of the instrumentalistaccount.) The classical account can be shown to be empirically well supported,and this makes it easier to show that virtue ethics of the classical kind is notvulnerable to some criticisms that assume the truth of an account of practicalreasoning that it rejects.

The classical account has also been criticized because of the notions of disposition and character that are central to it. Some modern theories object tomaking character basic to ethical discourse, as opposed to single actions; thisreflects a difference between types of ethical theory that focus on actions in isolation and types that emphasize the importance of the agent's life as a whole, and,relatedly, the importance of moral education and development. Recently, virtueethics of the classical kind has been attacked on the ground that its notion of adisposition is unrealistic. These attacks rely on some work in 'situationist' socialpsychology that claims that unobvious aspects of particular situations have a largerole in explaining our actions. Some philosophers have claimed from this that weare not justified in thinking that people have robust character traits; for, if theydid, these would explain their actions reliably and across a wide variety of typesof situation, excluding this kind of influence.

However, these studies assume a notion of disposition that is defined solelyin terms of frequency of actions, where the actions in question are defined withno reference to the agent's own reasons for acting. For virtue ethics, however, avirtue is a disposition to actfor reasons, and claims about frequency of action areirrelevant to this, until some plausible connection is established with the agent'sreasons, something none of the situationists have done.

2.2- PLATO'SETHICAL THEORY

The quest for excellence

Regardless of the interpretive difficulties posed by Plato's choice of genre, his masterful use of the dialogue form has its corresponding benefits. Highly dramatic dialogues such as Laches, Meno, Protagoras, and Gorgias bring brilliantly to life the urgent practical enterprise that sets the context for Plato's ethical philosophy. We may call this 'the quest for excellence (aretê)'. These works abound with characters who seek excellence for themselves or for their children, volunteer advice as to how it is to be acquired, or offer to teach it for a fee.

The dialogue Protagorasopens in the hours before dawn. Socrates, asleep in his bed, is awakened by Hippocrates. The excited youth begs to be taken to the house where Protagoras, the sophist, has just arrived for a visit. He wants Socrates to convince the famous sophist to take him on as a pupil. Hippocrates is so eager to study with Protagoras that he is willing to bankrupt his family and friends in order to pay the sophist's fees *(Pr. 310e)*. What will he learn from Protagoras? Excellence, Protagoras promises *(318a–319a)*. Another ambitious seeker after excellence is Meno, the title character in another dialogue. The young Thessalian has elected to apprentice himself to the orator Gorgias in order to achieve this goal *(Meno71c–d, 76c, 91a, 92d)*. Callicles in the dialogue Gorgiasis like-minded. The dialogue Lachesopens as two elderly fathers, Lysimachus and Melesias, ashamed about not having lived up to the reputations of their illustrious fathers, seek advice about how to educate their sons to achieve their grandfathers' excellence *(La. 179c–180a)*.

In the Euthydemus, Crito is preoccupied with the question of whom he should hire to educate his son Critoboulus*(Euthd. 306d–307a)*. These dialogues are thickly populated as well with a cast of characters who offer to teach excellence, for a fee, to those who seek it.These self-styled educators include historical figures such as Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias and the lesser known Euvenus of Paros *(Ap. 19e–20a, Pr. 314e– 316a,H.Maj. 283c–284b; cf. Gorg. 519e)* along with Euthydemus and Dionysodorus in the dialogue Euthydemus*(306e)*. The sophists' claim to be teachers of excellence is considered effrontery by conservatives like Anytus, who champion the traditional view that one learns excellence by associating with worthy fellow citizens.

The famous orator Gorgias seeks to avoid the hostility directed at the sophists by insisting that he teaches his pupils only rhetorical skill *(Gorg. 456a–457c)*. But he too is popularly seen as a sophist, and in any case, the seekers after excellence flock to him in the expectation that they will acquire what even Gorgias advertises as the greatest power known to men *(Gorg. 451d; cf. 466b)*.

In sum, these dialogues portray a cultural and intellectual climate in which people agree that it is extremely important to acquire excellence,but disagree about how it is to be acquired: hence the debating questionthat opens the Meno:

"Can you tell me, Socrates, can virtue be taught? Or is it not teachable but the results of practice, or is it neither of these, but men possess it by nature or in some other way?"(Meno70a)

In seeking excellence for themselves or their loved ones, these characters in Plato's dialogues are pursuing a thoroughly traditional goal – with a pedigree at least as old as the Homeric poems. Plato's dominant speaker in Lawsrefers to the ambitious seekers of excellence as 'those who seek to become the best as quickly as possible' *(LawsIV 718d7–e1)* a clear echo of the Homeric ideal articulated in the Iliadby the aged Peleus, who urges his son Achilles to 'always be the best andprevail over others' *(Homer, Iliad11.783; cf. 6.206–10).*

This is not to say that the conception of excellence has remained static in the centuries between the time of Homer and that of Plato. The excellence glorified in Homer is that of the warrior chieftain whose greatness consists in his fame (kleos) and prowess in battle, is proportional to the number of people he rules, and is measured by the property he has accumulated as a result of his dominance *(Iliad1.225–284).* The social context in which Socrates' interlocutors seek excellence is, however, not the Bronze Age battlefield where warriors clash, but the fifth-centurypolis(city state).The excellence sought in the latter context is 'the human and political kind' *(Ap. 20b4–5).*

Accordingly, Protagoras claims that he instructs his students in 'the political craft'*(Pr. 319a4; cf. Euthd. 291b–c).*The 'political craft' encompasses both the art of the citizen *(Pr.319a5),* as well as that of the political leader or statesman. Theart of the citizen consists in doing one's share in the cooperative project ofthe polis, and taking no more than one's share of the benefits; thus goodcitizenship requires justice and self-restraint *(Pr. 322b–323a; Rep. 352c).*Good citizenship, however, is hardly all that the ambitious seekers after arête hope to achieve. The political excellence that the elderly fathers inthe Lacheswish to inculcate in their sons is displayed, they think, byeminent statesmen like their own fathers, Aristides and Thucydides. Theywant their sons not merely to be just and temperate, but to emulate theaccomplishments of their grandfathers, who achieved 'a great many finethings. . . both in war and in peace in their management of the affairs bothof their allies and of the city' *(La. 179c).* The fathers' worry is not thattheir sons will turn out to be anti-social pariahs, but that they will beundistinguished *(179d4)* in the management of public affairs. Sotoo the excellence of interest to the ambitious Meno concerns 'taking careof public business' or 'managing a city' *(Meno71e; cf. 91a),* and this tooProtagoras promises to teach the young Hippocrates: "*What I teach is sound deliberation, both in domestic matters –how best to manage one's household, and in public affairs – howto realize one's maximum potential for success in political debateand action."(Protagoras318e5–319a2)*

The Homeric ideal of excellence, which glorifies competition and dominance,sits rather uncomfortably with the ideal of political excellence – in particular with the ideal of the good citizen, whose justice and self-restraint are insharp contrast to the aggressive self-aggrandizement of the Homeric hero*(G. 483d–e).*

The Homeric picture, however, still exerts a strong pull onthe imaginations of the ambitious seekers after excellence depicted byPlato. These tend to find attractive the preeminence and dominance thatcome with political leadership. They are eager to exercise power overothers and less interested, if at all, in living up to the demands of justiceand self-restraint. Hence temperance and justice are deliberately omittedfrom Callicles' list of the qualities of the 'superior person' *(G. 491b–d),* andSocrates makes a point of adding them to Meno's conception of excellence*(Meno73a),* and then has to remind him to add them again at *78c–e*.

One of Plato's projects in his dialogues is to address the tensions between the Homeric and the political conception of excellence, and to defendan account of political excellence that applies to private citizen and ruleralike. As the Athenian says in the Laws, the 'complete citizen . . . knowshow to rule and be ruled with justice' *(643e6),* and one must first learnhow to be ruled before one takes on rule *(762e)*. This larger project ofPlato is one of the reasons why Socrates typically responds, to those whoask how they might acquire excellence, that they must first think carefullyabout what excellence is. Thus in the Meno, the opening question, Canexcellence be taught?is quickly succeeded by the more fundamental question insisted upon by Socrates: What is excellence?

This question informs all of Plato's ethical writing – so let us be sure weunderstand what it means.Excellence, virtue, and happiness. The word that I have been translating as 'excellence' (aretê) is often, andquite properly, translated as 'virtue'.

This rendering can, however, give amisleading impression of the question to which Plato's Socrates urges hisinterlocutors' attention. First of all, as it is used in English today, 'virtue'tends to refer to a character trait – a feature of a person's psychology. Thatthis is so, however, is partly the intellectual legacy of Plato and Aristotle,at whose hands arête comes to be defined as just such an internal phenomenon: 'the condition of one's soul *(Rep. 444d13–e2; cf. Ap. 29e).*

Thisdefinition, however, is a theoretical refinement of the notion of arête understood by Socrates' interlocutors.Aretê, as Plato's and Socrates' contemporaries understand it, can certainly apply to such recognizable virtues as courage, wisdom, self-restraint, and justice (although the last two are controversial for thoseattracted to the Homeric ideal). We regularly find these four virtues listedas the four 'kinds of aretê' in Plato *(e.g. Meno74a, Pr. 329d–330a, La.198a,Rep. 428a, Laws963a–964b).* Socrates' interlocutors, however, aremore likely to understand courage, self-restraint and justice as patterns ofbehaviour than they are to conceive of them as psychological conditions.

Indeed it takes some coaching *(La. 191e–192b)* for Socrates to get Lachesto agree that virtue is a 'power' (*dunamis192b6)* of the soul. In any case,these interlocutors clearly understand arête to encompass many thingsother than the cardinal virtues. Such things as noble birth, bodily strength,good looks, social status, wealth, and success in competition are generallyconsidered by Greeks of Plato's day to be very important aspects of aretê.

These can in no way be understood as psychological traits. Thus Menoanswers Socrates' question, 'What is aretê?' with the proposal that arête is'ruling others' *(Meno73d)* or 'acquiring gold and silver' *(78c6–7)*. However unimpressive these proposals may be as ideals of human excellence, itis clear that Meno does not take arête to be a state of character. Similarly,the disappointed sons of Aristides and Thucydides who want their own sonsto achieve the arête of their illustrious grandfathers have in mind not thecharacters of these famous statesmen, but their great accomplishments.

Those whom Plato depicts as questing for excellence are primarily interested in improving not their characters but their lives. As a result, thenatural way for them to understand Socrates' question, 'What is excellence?' is as a normative issue about how one should live, rather than apsychological issue about states of character. This normative question isa central motif in dialogues such as the Gorgiasand the Republic, whichattempt to resolve the competing claims of the life that looks good byHomeric standards, and the life that meets the norms of a functioningpolis. The issue is typically articulated as a choice between lives: the lifeof the self-aggrandizing strong man unshackled by the political norm ofequality among citizens, as opposed to the life of the personwho restrains his pursuit of worldly advantage in the light of the norms ofjustice.

The dispute is explicitly articulated by Callicles in the Gorgiasas a question about which sort of life is excellence (aretê, *492c5*), although it ismore regularly presented in the dialogue as a question about what life ishappy *(472c–e, 493d, 507a–508b; cf. 492c)*. Alternatively put, the questionconcerns 'how one should live' *(492d5, 500c)* or the correct way to live*(491e, 487a; cf. 461c, 481c)*, or 'the best way to live' *(512e5; cf. Rep. 344e)*. Thus Socrates' question, 'What is excellence?' inquiresinto the best way to live.

Modern readers of Plato are prone to ask, best in what way? Does Platohave in mind the life of the best sort of person (a good person), or the lifethat is best forthe person who leads it (a good life)? The answer is thathe has both in mind. The two value terms associated with excellence inPlato's discussion are the 'kalon' (fine, admirable) and the 'agathon' (good,beneficial). It is tempting for readers today to assume that kalon(the fineor admirable) applies to the life of the good person, while the notion ofgood (agathon) applies to the life that is good fora person.

Polus in factattempts to make such a distinction, in the dialogue Gorgias, in support ofhis claim that the life of injustice can be superior to that of the just person.While the unjust life, he admits, may be more shameful (aischron, theopposite of kalon), it is still a better life (more agathon) *(Gorg. 474c–d)*.However, Polus makes no headway with this improvisation, which getshim involved in a muddle *(474d–475c; cf. 477b–479c)*.

Moreover, hereceives no support for this argumentative strategy from any other character in the dialogue, including the most strident defender of the gloriesof 'injustice'. Callicles, who takes up the debate with Socrates after Polushas proved inept, explicitly rejects the latter's attempt to

drive a wedgebetween the kalonand the agathon: ‘whatever is worse is also more shameful’ *(Gorg.483a; cf. H. Maj. 296e)*.

In this respect, it is Callicles, not Polus, who is more faithful to theoriginal notion of excellence. While the ambitious young people (and theirparents) portrayed by Plato understand excellence to be admirable and fine(kalon), something they would be ashamed to lack,they also consider theexcellent life to be flourishing, successful, and prosperous – that is, goodfor the person who lives it. The Greek term for such success in life is‘eudaimonia’(‘happiness’ or well-being), synonymous with ‘doing well’(euprattein, Euthd. 280b6). This is what parents wish for their children*(Lys. 207e)*, and it is what we all want for ourselves *(Euthd. 278e, 282a;Meno78a)*.

In dialogues whose central motif is the quest for excellence, this quest isnot distinguished from the pursuit of happiness. Thus Callicles sums upthe choice between lives in the Gorgiasas a question about which life is‘excellence and happiness’ *(Gorg. 492c5–6; cf.507c)*. After spending many pages in the Euthydemusdetermining what aperson needs in order to be happy *(278e–282d)*, Socrates refers to this aswhat will make a person ‘a happy man and a good one’ *(282e)*. Indeed, thevery thing that Meno identifies as excellence – the power to acquire goodthings such as wealth and influence *(Meno77b–78b)* – appears in theEuthydemusas a popular conception of happiness *(278e–279b)*. Socrates’interlocutors readily agree or assume that to harm someone is to make himless excellent *(Rep. 335b; Meno91c)*.

In general, any proposal in Plato’sdialogues about what excellence is must pass the test that it be good for aperson, as Socrates regularly reminds his interlocutors.Indeed the disputein the Republic, whether justice is a virtue *(Rep. 348e, 350d, 351a)*, turnson whether justice is good for the just person.

This is not to say that the notion of arête at play simply collapses intothe notion of self-interest, as we understand it. Granted, Plato’s intendedreadership and Socrates’ interlocutors are disinclined to judge a course ofaction admirable (kalon) unless they think it is beneficial to the personwho performs it *(La. 192d; cf. H. Maj. 296e)*. Indeed, they are likely tothink it admirable precisely because it is beneficial (Rep. 364a) and shameful to the extent that it harms the agent *(Ap. 28b, Gorg. 486a–b; cf. 509c)*.

On the other hand, they are also disinclined to think something is goodunless they also think it is admirable. Hence a popular song aboutthe greatest goods does not count wealth as a good unless it is honestlyacquired *(Gorg451e; cf. Solon I, 3–8)*. Most people, Socrates reports,even if they are inclined to think pleasure is good, do not consider shameful pleasures to be good *(Pr. 351c)*. Callicles is a case in point *(Gorg.494e–495a, 499b)*.

It is important not to confuse this background assumption about therelation between excellence and happiness, which is shared by Socratesand all of his interlocutors other than Polus, with the disputed normativethesis about justice debated in the Gorgiasand the Republic. In thesedialogues, Socrates addresses the scepticism of those who doubt that justice (not arête in

general) is good for a person – that is, whether it is agenuine excellence *(Rep. 348d, 351a)*. This controversial thesis concernsthe choice between lives: is the life of justice better than the life of successful injustice? The uncontroversial background assumption, by contrast,has no normative implications. It implies nothing about which lives areadmirable and good, but functions instead as a constraint on how one is toform and integrate judgments about what is admirable and who is happy:if something is admirable, it has to be good, and if good, admirable.

Ifit seems to you (as it does to Polus) that justice is admirable but that itmay not be good for a person, the background assumption constrains youto reject either the judgment that justice is admirable, or the standards ofwell-being according to which it is not beneficial. In the normative disputethat pervades the Socratic dialogues, Plato portrays Socrates' opponents astaking the first option while Socrates takes the second.

The modern response to the impression that justice is admirable but notnecessarily beneficial has been to endorse both conjuncts of the impression.But this is implicitly to reject the background constraint that operates inthe Platonic dialogues. The modern ethical tradition has concluded thatthe goodness of persons is of a different kind than the goodness of lives.

This is the route to the modern distinction between morality and self-interest, but it is not the route that Plato takes. Plato shows no interestin investigating ethical matters outside the scope of the assumption thatwhat is admirable and what is beneficial in human life converge – hencethe short shrift given to Polus's proposal to the contrary *(Gorg.483a–b;cf.Rep. 348e–349a)*.

To see why this assumption about the good life and the good personseems natural and plausible to Plato's contemporaries, consider the parallel case of health. Socrates identifies it as both the excellence (aretê) of thebody, and its well-being (eudaimonia) *(Gorg. 479a–c, 478b–c)*. Even tomodern philosophical sensibilities, this equivalence should seem quitestraightforward. Plato and his contemporaries assume that the excellenceand happiness of a human being are related in just the same way. Whatis admirable in a human being is expected to coincide with what is goodfor that person. In the dialogues of Plato, we find the inquiry into the goodlife conducted in the optimism (to modern views, perhaps naïve optimism)that these two types of value converge.

Excellence and knowledge

The eager questers after excellence in Plato's dialogues are not pledgingthemselves to a life of selfless and altruistic 'virtue'. On the contrary, theyare seeking to live well in every sense of the term. One might be puzzledthen at Socrates' claim in the Apologythat he has devoted his life toexhorting his fellow Athenians to 'care about aretê' *(Ap. 31b; cf. 29d–30b,36c; Euthd. 275a, 278d)*. If aretê, as his contemporaries understandit, requires no recommendation, what is Socrates doing in exhorting hisfellow citizens to care about it?

First of all, Socrates' exhortation is not that people should seek excellence – for they are busy enough doing that without his urging. He exhortsthem rather to 'take care' or 'be careful'

(epimeleisthai) in this pursuit.Socrates thinks his ambitious contemporaries are not being properlycareful or discriminating about what they seek to acquire under the nameof excellence. They are obsessed with the question – how to acquireexcellence – to the neglect of the prior question insisted upon by Socrates:what excellence really is. The eager young Hippocrates in the Protagorasisan example of this lack of due deliberation. In his ambition to becomegreat, he is eager to jump on the latest bandwagon, thinking that whateverProtagoras can teach him will be just what he needs. Or, even worse, hemistakenly believes that all he needs to learn in order to live well is how tobe a clever speaker *(Pr. 312d).*

Second, Socrates is urging on the Athenians a particular conception ofexcellence:Are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth,reputation and honours as possible, while you do not care for norgive thought to wisdom and truth, or the best possible state ofyour soul?*(Apology29d–e; cf. 30a–b, 36c)*

According to Socrates, care of one's soul or psyche (Greek psuchê) ismore important in the quest for excellence than the accumulation of suchexternal objects of ambition as wealth, reputation, and political power.One cares for one's soul, in his view, by seeking 'wisdom and truth' – thatis, by engaging in philosophy, the practice of examining the ethical beliefsof oneself and others *(Ap. 28e–29a).* Thus Socrates' exhortation to 'careabout excellence' is an exhortation to engage in philosophy, as he indicatesexplicitly in the Euthydemus*(275a, 278d; cf. 288d, 307b–c).*

Socrates supports this exhortation at Euthydemus*(278e–282a)* by arguing that knowledge provides everything one needs for living well. He offersthis set of arguments to the two self-styled teachers of excellence, Euthydemus and his brother Dionysodorus, as an example of how to exhortsomeone to care (epimeleisthai) about 'aretêand wisdom' *(278d–e).* Theargument begins from the uncontroversial premise that we all want to 'dowell' (euprattein) *(278e)* – that is, be happy (*eudaimon, 282a; cf. 280b–e).*

This much all the seekers after excellence agree. But what does happinessconsist in? *(278e).* Socrates begins by considering the view that doing wellis simply a matter of possessing good things *(278e; cf. Meno77b–78b).* Heoffers a fairly long list of popularly recognized goods, beginning withwealth, health, good looks, satisfaction of bodily needs, noble birth, livingin a powerful country and honour*(Euthd. 279a–b; cf. Gorg. 467e, Laws661a–d).* To these he adds self-control, justice, bravery and wisdom *(Euthd.279b–c)* – even though, he recognizes, the first two may be controversialto those enamoured of the Homeric ideal. Finally, he finishes off the list byadding good fortune (eutuchia, *279c*).

Socrates then sets out to show that all the other items on the list dependon 'wisdom'. He argues first that wisdom is responsible for good fortune*(279d–280b).* He supports this improbable assertion by citing examples ofdisciplines (music, navigation, medicine, military science) in which thosewith the relevant knowledge have 'better luck' than those without it: forexample, the skilled sailor has better luck at sea than the unskilled *(279e).*

One might object that although Socrates is right to conclude that havingknowledge considerably reduces the scope of luck (good and bad) in ourlives (this is why one goes to the doctor when ill, or sails with an experienced navigator, rather than simply 'trusting one's luck'), he is wrong toinfer the stronger claim that 'wisdom makes men fortunate in every case'(280a). This is to claim, quite improbably, that knowledge or skill issufficient to eliminate the effects of good and bad luck in our lives. Eventhe best doctor, for example, cannot eliminate the risk that you will comedown with a deadly and untreatable disease.Plato, however, does not introduce any such objection into the dialogue.

Instead, having eliminated good luck as an independent source of happiness, Socrates proceeds to consider the relation between wisdom and theother goods on the list. He argues that none of these 'goods' is in fact goodfor you unless you possess wisdom, and that wisdom is what makes themgood *(Euthd. 280c–281e; cf. Meno88a–89a)*. This is because, first of all,it is not the possession but the use of such things that benefits a person(*Euthd. 280c–d)*. Second, one must not only use them, but use them properly *(280e–281a)*. Money and power, for example, are of no benefit tosomeone who does not know how to use them well *(cf. Gorg. 469d–e)*.Even courage and temperance can bring about great harm if controlled byignorance rather than knowledge *(Euthd. 281c)*.

Thus, in order to behappy, one needs knowledge of how to use properly the conventionallyrecognized 'goods' (280d–e). The other putative 'goods' on the list (wealthetc.) are not good in themselves; only if they are used wisely is a personbetter off having rather than lacking them *(281d–e; cf. Ap. 30b)*.

The conclusion so stated amounts to the thesis that wisdom is necessaryfor living well, and does not depend on the more questionable argument,atEuthd. *(279d–280b)*, that wisdom is responsible for good fortune. However, Socrates also draws the stronger conclusion, that wisdom is sufficientfor happiness: '[wisdom] is the onlything that makes a man happy andfortunate' *(282d)*, and this stronger thesis does depend on that dubiousargument. Socrates' main interest, however, is in the further conclusionthat he derives, quite legitimately, from either thesis: that a personwho wants to live well must strive to become as wise as possible *(282a,282d)*. To pursue such wisdom is to 'engage in philosophy' *(philosophein,282d1)*.

The subject matter of this wisdom is politics, Socrates goes on to argue*(Euthd. 291b–c)*. The nature of political wisdom is further explored indialogues such as Lachesand Charmides, where Socrates elaborates uponthe implication of the Euthydemus*(279a–281d)* that, respectively, courageand temperance (sôphrosunê), must be 'used properly' in order to be genuinegoods. Fearless resolution on the one hand, and self-restraint on the other,can be bad for a person unless they are informed by wisdom.In the Laches, the subject of inquiry is courage, whose scope Socratesexpands beyond the traditional military context (where one's life, health,and safety are at stake), to apply to all contexts where one of the bodily orexternal goods on the Euthydemuslist

is at risk. Thus he claims, forexample, that one can be courageous in illness and poverty *(La. 191d–e).*

It is quickly established that simply enduring such risk or loss is notcourageous (for it can be foolish or shameful to do so). Only enduringwhen it is wise to do so is courageous *(192d).* The rest of the conversationwith Laches raises puzzles about what sort of wisdom this could be. Itcannot be knowledge or skill that insures you against the risk (as knowledge of diving makes it relatively safe for an experienced person to diveinto wells, and knowledge of business makes it safe for a skilled investorto invest money in an enterprise – 192e–193c). Rather, it is knowledge ofwhen it is good to undergo a genuine risk to one's life, or health, or property, and when it is not.This is knowledge of good and bad *(199b–d).*

Here we have impressed upon us that knowing how to 'use' such advantages as wealth and health includes knowing when to forgo their pursuitor risk losing them *(cf. Meno78d–e).*

TheCharmidesconcurs in this conception of the knowledge requiredfor living well. Here temperance (sôphrosunê) is the topic of discussion.While a popular conception of temperance identifies it with modesty42(aidôs, 160e4), a policy of modesty is not always a good one to follow. Forexample, the naked and shipwrecked Odysseus's need for food and shelterwould not have been well served had he modestly refrained from enlistingthe help of the young Nausikaa*(161a).*

Thus living well requires knowing when to be modest and when to be bold. This is a version of the 'usingscience' of the Euthydemus, here dubbed 'knowledge about knowledge'*(Charm. 166e ff).* The dialogue ends with a series of puzzles about thisknowledge, which can be solved by invoking the conception of knowledgethat ends the Laches: that it is knowledge of good and evil, specificallyof when it is good to pursue the things that other human skills can securefor us.

Knowledge vs. rhetoric

That you need knowledge of good and bad in order to live well is also amajor argument of the Gorgias. In contrast to dialogues such as Euthydemus, Charmides, and Laches, Socrates here argues for this conclusionagainst opponents who explicitly reject it. The famous orator Gorgias andhis Athenian admirers, Polus and Callicles, think that rhetoric (skill atpersuasion) is the only knowledge one needs to acquire in order to livewell. Rhetoric, according to Gorgias and his devotees, is the finest type ofknowledge *(Gorg. 448c, e; cf. 466b)* and deals with 'the greatest humanconcerns' *(451d).*

This is to accord to rhetoric the same honorific status that Socratesattributes to the knowledge that he urges his compatriots to seek.InEuthydemus, where he identifies this wisdom as political knowledge *(288d–290d; 291b–d),*he explicitly rejects the pretensions of rhetoric to thisstatus *(289d–290a; cf. 305c–e).* Here in the Gorgiashe offers a similar repudiation of rhetoric's claim to be the key to living well. Rhetoric of the kindcelebrated by Gorgias and Polus is only an

ingratiating imitation of thegenuine political craft *(Gorg. 463a–d; cf. 481d–e; Euthd. 289e–290a).*

While Plato recognizes that persuasion is an important tool to be usedby the true statesman (politikos), his dominant speakers consistently maintain that its use must be subordinated to the statesman's goal of caringfor the polisand its citizens *(Stsm. 303e–304d; cf. 305d; Euthd. 289c–d).*

The practice of rhetoric, on this view, must be governed by the normsof justice. Gorgias and his followers, by contrast, have a very differentconception of the uses of rhetoric. With the power to persuade the othercitizens in a public forum, the skilled orator can convince them of thejustice of whatever endeavour he proposes, even if it advances his interestat their expense. In general, Gorgias boasts, rhetoric is the 'source of ruleover others in one's own city' *(Gorg. 452d).* It enables you to bend othersto your own will, making them in effect your slaves *(452d–e).*

In a democracy such as Plato's Athens, political power depends on beingpersuasive. Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is accordingly prized very highlyby those with political ambitions. This is why so many of the ambitious,like Meno and Callicles, seek out teachers of rhetoric rather than sophists.

In Plato's dialogues, it is primarily the unscrupulous (like Meno) or thecynical (like Callicles and Polus) who take this route. Plato thereby emphasizes that the ability to persuade others, and thereby 'rule them', as Gorgiaspromises, is attractive independently of its connection to justice. HencePlato depicts the famous master of rhetoric as denying that he teachesjustice *(Meno95b–c;Gorg. 456c–457c)*,while the orator's acolytes extolthe benefits of wielding power over others without being constrained bythe norms of justice *(Gorg. 471a–d; 483b–484c).*

Rhetorical skill has the added benefit, in their eyes, of enabling you todefend yourself successfully against prosecution. With this knowledge, youwill never be vulnerable to malicious prosecution, as Socrates was (*Gorg.486a–c:H. Maj. 304b*). And if you should be prosecuted for crimes ofwhich you are guilty, skillful use of rhetoric will ensure that you evadelegal sanctions or punishment (*Rep. 365d; cf. Gorg. 478e–479c).* Rhetorictherefore gives you the power to do what you want with impunity.It isthe wisdom you need in order to live well, according to its disciples,because if practised successfully (which they concede not everyone will beable to do) it enables you to do whatever you want.

Callicles is the ultimate defender, in the dialogue, of the thesis that livingwell is being able to do whatever you want. Indeed, he claims, the moreyou are able to do what you want, without being subject to any constraints– internal or external – the better your life is:

"*The man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites toget as large as possible and not restrain them. And when they areas large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote*

himself tothem by virtue of his bravery and wisdom, and to fill them withwhatever he may have an appetite for at the time." (Gorgias, 491e8–492a3)

The 'wisdom' (phronesis) that Callicles here attributes to the person who isliving well is quite different from the 'using craft' conceived of by Socrates(*cf. Gorg. 521b).* The great person, in Callicles' eyes, is wise about howbest to fulfill his desires, not about whether it is good or bad to get whathe wants.Callicles defends this picture of the good life by invoking hedonism – thethesis that pleasure is the good (*Gorg. 495a).* Such a life is better, he claims,than the restrained alternative proposed by Socrates at 492e because itcontains more pleasure *(494a–495a).* Socrates responds by showing thatCallicles does not really believe that all pleasures are good. Some pleasuresare shameful, even Callicles concedes *(497e–499b).* Thus Callicles cannotconsistently invoke hedonism, since he does not accept its central tenet,that pleasure, in and of itself, is good. Although Callicles attempts to saveface by denying that he ever really meant to endorse hedonism (*499b),*

Socrates succeeds in establishing that, even by Callicles' own standards,living well requires the ability to discriminate between good and bad.Thus, Callicles must agree with Socrates that in order to live well oneneeds knowledge of good and bad.One might object that Callicles goes overboard in rejecting all forms ofself-control at *491e–492a*. In his initial description of the best life, whichhas clear Homeric origins, the excellent person is entitled to rule over andexploit his inferiors (483a–484c). Realistically, however, such a life mustsurely involve some kinds of self-control, and Socrates is able to exploitthis fact in his refutation of Callicles.

Why then does Plato choose todepict Callicles as rejecting temperance and espousing hedonism?Presumably it is because one of Plato's main goals in the dialogue is torefute the view that being able to do whatever you want is what makes forthe best life. This is the view that motivates the admiration for rhetoricexpressed by Polus and other characters, and it is this view that receivesits ultimate expression in hedonism and the rejection of self-restraint. Inthe Gorgias, Plato shows that this view, however appealing it may seemon first glance, is, on reflection, unacceptable even to its proponents. WhileCallicles clearly disagrees with Socrates about the characteristics of thegood life, he must agree with Socrates' contention that living well requiresknowledge of good and bad.

The dearth of knowledge

A striking counterpart to Socrates' insistence that we need knowledge ofgood and bad in order to live well is his equally emphatic contention thatno one has this knowledge. At the opening of the dialogue Meno, Socratesshocks the title character by denying that he has ever met anyone whoknows what excellence is *(71b–c).* This claim is one of the themes of hisdefence speech in the Apology, where he claims that he has spent his lifeinterrogating Athenians who have areputation for wisdom. While he concedes that many of them are knowledgeable about various technical matters *(22d–e*), he claims to have determined that none of them has knowledgeabout

‘the most important things’ *(21b–22e; 22d–e).* He has arrived at thisconclusion by interrogating those with a reputation for or a conceit ofgoodness or excellence *(29d–e),* challenging them to ‘give an account of[their] lives’ *(Ap. 39c; cf. La. 187e10–188a2).* Thus that ‘most important’issue (*Ap. 22d–e; cf. Gorg. 487b, La. 200a*) about which Socrates interrogates his fellow Athenians, and claims that no one is wise, is how oneshould live.

The three ‘dialogues of definition’,Laches, Charmides, and Euthyphro,as well as the first part of the Meno*(70a–79e),* illustrate the type of interrogation that licenses Socrates’ conclusion that the Athenians do not haveknowledge of excellence. The interrogations proceed on the assumption,explicitly stated in the Charmides, that the excellent person should be ableto state what excellence is *(Charm. 159a).* This assumption makes perfectsense in the light of the arguments in the Euthydemus(*278e–282a*), considered above, that doing well depends on having knowledge of how tolive, and the background assumption that ‘excellence’ is naturally understood to be a kind of life rather than a state of the soul or other psychological condition. If knowledge of temperance is knowledge of some thesisin moral psychology, Socrates would seem to be operating on a dubiousassumption. However, if knowledge of temperance is knowledge of howto act temperately (and hence of how to act well), then it is not unreasonable to assume that someone who claims to be living well should be ableto explain why he is right to act as he does. Unless his success is entirely amatter of luck, it must be due to knowledge.

The interrogations that expose the interlocutor’s lack of knowledgefollow a common pattern. In the Laches, Socrates asks two respectedAthenian generals, Laches and Nicias, about one type of excellence, courage. Laches proposes first that courage is standing one’s ground in battle*(190e*). However, this obviously won’t do, Socrates points out, sincesometimes standing one’s ground is foolish, and retreating is not alwayscowardly (*190e–192c*). He then suggests that what Laches really means isthat courage is wise endurance (*192d*). Laches readily accepts this proposal, but he shows no understanding in the aftermath *(192e–199e*) of thesort of wisdom that would be required – being unable to distinguish thewisdom that allows one to escape unharmed from dangerous situations(which a skilled well-diver might have – 193a–c), from the wisdom thattells one when it is right to risk harm (*cf. 195c–e;Gorg. 511c–512e; Laws707d, 727d).*

Nicias does better than Laches, and indicates *(La. 195b–d)* that therequisite knowledge is the ‘using kind’ identified in the Euthydemus–which amounts (as Socrates readily points out) to knowledge of good andevil *(La. 196d–199e).* But even this proposal does not amount to knowledge of what courage, or excellence, is – unless we understand the inquiryinto excellence as a psychological inquiry into the nature of the goodperson’s soul. As an answer to the practical question, ‘How should welive?’, it is worthless. It will not enable one to discriminate between thosecases of endurance that are courageous, and those that are foolish, or thecases where one should stand one’s ground, and those where one shouldnot. Nor will it allow Nicias or anyone else to answer the practical question immediately put to them by the elderly fathers whose quest framesthe dialogue: whether training in a newfangled variety of combat will infact make their sons courageous.

A similar pattern is exhibited in the Charmides, which investigates thenature of temperance (sôphrosunê). There Socrates interrogates the youngCharmides, along with his uncle and mentor, Critias. Charmides is widelyadmired for being temperate *(Charm. 157d).* When questioned by Socratesabout what temperance is, the youth begins, in the manner of Laches, byproposing that temperance is keeping quiet *(159b*), or being modest *(160e*).He then quickly concedes, when pressed by Socrates, that neither kind ofbehaviour is always temperate *(159b–161a).* Charmides at this point defersto his uncle Critias, who supplies in sequence a number of proposals: thattemperance is minding one's own business *(161b);*that it is doing goodthings *(163e);* and that it is doing good things as a result of knowledge(*164a–d).* As in the Laches, the dialogue concludes with a series of puzzlesabout the nature of this knowledge – all of which point towards thesolution that temperance is knowledge of good and evil.

Although Critiasis unable to solve the puzzles, Plato clearly portrays him, like Nicias, aspartial to the view that living well requires knowledge of good and evil(e.g. *174b*). Nonetheless, even if Critias were able to solve the puzzles, thiswould not show that he has the knowledge of how to act temperately.

Socrates includes himself in the sweeping denial that no one has knowledge. His disclaimers of the knowledge he seeks are a persistent theme inPlato's dialogues *(Ap. 21b–22e, 23a; Meno70b–71a;La. 200e–201a).* Manyreaders are puzzled by or sceptical of this disavowal,which is puzzling ifwe take inquiry into excellence to be distinct from inquiry into the good life.Doesn't Socrates at least think he knows that virtue is a kind of knowledge? We have seen, however, that he does not credit Nicias and Critiaswith the requisite knowledge on the basis of such claims. This tells us thathis question, 'What is excellence?' investigates a person's claim to have knowledge of good and bad. If all a person can say to substantiate his claim tohave this knowledge is that one needs knowledge of good and bad in orderto live well, this is no evidence that he has such knowledge. So Socrates hasno reason to attribute such knowledge to himself if this is all he can say.

A modern reader of Plato might be unconvinced that these interrogations succeed in establishing that the refuted interlocutors lack knowledgeof how to live well. Might not a person know how to live well, and exhibitsuch knowledge in his or her life, but be unable to articulate it in a general formula?Thus, the objection might go, Nicias' or Laches' failureto articulate what the courageous person knows does not show that theylack this knowledge, and similarly Charmides and Critias' failure to articulate what the temperate person knows does not show that they lack therequisite knowledge.

Plato's intended readership, however, would never make such an objection. That audience, which is at least a generation later than the dramaticdate of these dialogues, knows very well that Charmides and his mentorturned out to be rapacious scoundrels who committed great crimes againstthe Athenian democracy at the end of the Peloponnesian war (twenty-eightyears after the dramatic date of the dialogue). Critias was the leader andCharmides a member of the oligarchic

junta installed as rulers of Athens in404b.c.e. by the victorious Spartans. Known as 'The Thirty', they ruledwith great violence and intemperance – expelling, murdering, and confiscating property (in the manner fantasized by Polus –Gorg. 4*68b)* untilthey were overthrown and the democracy restored less than a year later.

These historical facts would have been vividly in the minds of Plato'soriginal readers.Nor does Plato expect his audience to have a high opinion of Nicias andLaches, who were military leaders during the Peloponnesian war. ThedialogueLachesis set in the early years of the thirty-year conflict, whenAthenian power still prevails and the Athenians are optimistic of victory.

Nicias and Laches enjoy high public repute at the time, which is why theelderly fathers consult them about how their sons might achieve excellence. The dialogue is written, however, after the bitter and humiliating defeatof Athens, and after Nicias, in particular, has been disgraced by foolishdecisions that led to the defeat of the Athenian expedition against Syracusein 413. Indeed, Plato deliberately draws the readers' attention to this fact.

Another failed pretender to knowledge of excellence, Meno, is known toPlato's audience as a rapacious and opportunistic political and militaryadventurer.And finally, consider Euthyphro, of the eponymous dialogueinvestigating the nature of piety. While we have no independent information about the historical Euthyphro,Plato goes to great pains in thedialogue itself to paint him as a fool – engaged in a prosecution that all ofhis contemporaries and Plato's readership would have regarded as highlyimpious. He is prosecuting his father for murder – not as a publicprosecutor, but as a private citizen bringing the charge on behalf of thedeceased. This scandalizes his contemporaries because it violates the normof filial piety. Regardless of the merits of the case against his father (whichPlato presents as doubtful), a charge of murder would be expected to beprosecuted by a relative of the victim. Euthyphro defends his action byclaiming to have specialized knowledge of piety and justice *(4e–5a; cf. 3b–c,4b).* However, upon examination, Euthyphro shows no more evidenceof his professed knowledge than the other refuted interlocutors we haveconsidered.

Far from displaying their professed ethical knowledge in their lives,those whom Socratic examination shows to be lacking in knowledge alsofailed to display such knowledge in their lives.

Euthyphro prosecutedwhen it was impious to do so; Nicias foolishly held his ground when heshould have retreated; and Critias and Charmides' conduct while in powergave no one reason to believe they had knowledge of temperance.

Plato's indictment of the Golden Age

Plato's intended audience live in the fractious 4th century b. c. ein a weakened Athens that looks back with nostalgia to the 'Golden Age' of theearly fifth century, the time of Pericles *(495–429)*, Themistocles *(582–462)*,and Cimon *(d. 450)*, under whose leadership Athens became a wealthyimperial power. This audience tends to be harsh in its judgment of laterleaders like Nicias *(470–413)* and Laches *(d. 418)*, who failed to preserveAthens' former glory and prosperity, or like Critias and Charmides, whosubverted its most revered institutions. On the other hand, they tend toagree, with interlocutors in Plato's dialogues, that Pericles, Themistoclesand Cimon were clear exemplars of political excellence. Plato's indictment for ignorance, however, extends even to these revered leaders of the'Golden Age'.

In the dialogues we have been considering, Socrates regularly observesthat none of these legendary statesmen succeeded in passing on his supposed excellence to his children. The sons of Pericles, he points out morethan once, did not amount to anything. Nor did those of Themistocles,Aristides the Just, or Thucydides the general *(Meno93a–94e;Pr. 319e–320b; cf. La. 179c–d)*. Plato's dialogues propose two different explanations of this. One, offered in the Meno, is that these politicians had divinelyinspired correct belief, not knowledge, and this is why they were unableto pass on their competence to anyone else *(Meno99b–100b)*.

This ishardly a complimentary portrait of the eminent Athenians, as Anytus comments explicitly in the Meno*(99e)*.Even more devastating is the explanation advanced forcefully by Socratesin the Gorgias, where he alleges that Pericles, Themistocles, and Cimonwere charlatans rather than true statesmen. Their conduct of the city'saffairs manifested not divinely inspired correct judgment, but the greatestignorance. The only revered figures who are omitted from this indictmentare the grandfathers from the Laches: Thucydides, who opposed Pericles'policy of imperial expansion, and Aristides, who was a hero of the Persianwars which liberated Athens from Persian aggression.

By contrast, heclaims, those who led Athens in the pursuit of wealth and empire wereadept not at protecting and benefiting the city, but at flattering the population and catering to its appetites *(Gorg. 515c–517c)*. These so-called'statesman' were adept at the flattering persuasion taught by Gorgias*(463a–465e)*, rather than the political knowledge sought by Socrates.

Thus,Plato tells his readers, virtually none of the revered political figures ofAthens' 'Golden Age' who serve as exemplars and role models for the ambitious youth portrayed in Plato's dialogues, exemplified political excellence.They did not know what excellence is.

Virtue and external goods

While Plato argues that it is impossible to derive any benefit from theexternal goods unless one has knowledge, and hence virtue, later philosophers raise a further question: whether, if one has this knowledge, onestill needs the external goods? That is, if a person possesses virtue and

actsvirtuously but fails to secure such things as health, financial stability andmaterial comfort, is he nonetheless happy? Stoic philosophers, a centuryand more after Plato, answered this question with a vigorous affirmative,while their Peripatetic contemporaries (heirs of Aristotle) insist on thenegative (Cicero, Fin. *3.41–44).*

However astounding the Stoic answer may be (and we will examinetheir reasons for it in Chapter 3), the question itself deserves comment. Tobe in a position to ask it, one must have travelled a significant philosophical distance from the context in which Plato begins his ethical theorizing.

Recall that Socrates' arguments are addressed to those who take it forgranted that such things as health and wealth are what make one happy(*Euthd. 279a–c)*, and that 'virtue' (aretê) is the life in which one makes useof and enjoys such advantages *(Meno77b–78b)*. On such assumptions about arête and happiness, excellence involves success in the pursuit ofexternal goods, and it makes no sense to wonder whether one can behappy (or even excellent) without such external success. It takes Plato'sphilosophical development of the notions of excellence and happiness toopen the way to raising the question.

Through the figure of Socrates, Plato develops an alternative conceptionof excellence. Rather than external success in life, it is the internal perfection of a person, a 'state of one's soul'.With arête thus internalized(which naturally suits the translation 'virtue'), it is possible to distinguishit from the external success with which it was originally associated, andconceptualize the possibility of a life that has the former but lacks thelatter: that of the good person who is wise, courageous, temperate andjust, but extremely unfortunate in his pursuit of the external advantages.The most extreme version of such a case is described by Glaucon: the goodperson who nonetheless has a reputation for great injustice (*Rep. 361c),*and as a result is 'whipped, stretched on a rack, chained, blinded with fire,and at the end, when he has suffered every kind of evil . . . impaled' (*Rep.361e4–362a2; cf. Gorg. 473c)*. Such a person has virtue in the internalsense identified by Plato, but lacks all the sought after 'external goods' –including even the minimal condition of freedom from pain.

The figure of 'the good person on the rack' becomes a chestnut amonglater philosophers, and the question about virtue and external goods tendsto be formulated as whether the good person on the rack is happy.However, even though the figure originates in Plato it is far from clearwhat Plato's answer would be to the question, which is never raised explicitly in his dialogues. The Stoics, who claim that the good person is happyeven in such circumstances, take their inspiration from Plato – in particularfrom Socrates' famous dictum that 'the good person can't be harmed' (*Ap.41d; cf. Gorg. 527d*).

Later Platonists also interpret Plato as subscribingto the Stoic view that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness.How plausible is this as an interpretation of Plato?To be sure, manythings said by the dominant characters in his dialogues are quite suggestiveof such a position. If the good man can't be harmed, doesn't this show thatthe sorts of losses that can be visited upon him byothers

(the loss of property, family, reputation, and bodily integrity, or the experience of excruciating and unremitting pain) make no difference to his well-being? Perhapsnot, for we have seen that in the Euthydemus, which provides argumentsin support of this inspirational proclamation from the Apology, Socrates'exhortation to 'love wisdom (philosophein) and care for virtue' *(Euthd.275a; cf. 278d)* is based in part on the argument that wisdom secures oneagainst ill fortune *(279d–80a)*. That is, wisdom assures us against the lossof the external goods that happiness is ordinarily taken to involve.

Giventhis assumption (however dubious it may be), virtuous activity wouldindeed suffice for happiness; however, it would secure the external goodsas well. Thus Socrates in the Euthydemusdoes not endorse the positionthat virtue makes one happy even without the external goods.

TheRepublicgives mixed signals about whether a person can be happywithout external goods. Socrates requires that the education of the guardians inculcates in them the disposition to withstand with equanimity misfortunes such as impoverishment, the loss of loved ones, and so on *(Rep.387d–388d; cf. Laws632a–b)*. This is the appropriate attitude to take ifvirtue is the only thing that makes a life good.

However, the thesis aboutthe goodness of justice that Glaucon and Adeimantus challenge Socrates toprove is a comparative thesis, not a sufficiency thesis.Socrates devotesthe argument of books II–X to answering the question of whether one isbetter offbeing just, thereby forgoing the external advantages that onemight gain from successful injustice, than one would be as a result ofcommitting successful injustice. Even if the former life is better than thelatter one, it does not follow that all versions of the former (including thejust person on the rack) are themselves happy – unless we assume thatany unhappy life is just as bad as any other. Absent this assumption, thejust person on the rack can still be better off than the successful unjustperson (in virtue of the latter's inner psychological turmoil), even if hisown physical torments prevent him from being happy.

In the Gorgias, Socrates indicates that it is possible to rank unhappylives as better and worse *(Gorg. 469b; cf. 473d–e)*. There, as in theRepublic,his main argument is for a comparative thesis about virtue – in this case,that one is better off being unjustly treated (and thereby losing externalgoods) than in committing such injustice *(Gorg. 474c–475c, 508c–509c)*.

Still, in at least two places, he says explicitly that the virtuous personis happy *(470e, 507b–c)*. These are not, however, in contexts that raisethe possibility that the virtuous person might be lacking in externalgoods. Indeed, the assertion at 470e concerns the Great King of Persia – renowned for his wealth and power. At *507b–c*, Socrates' claim concernsthe scenario in which one might increase one's external goods by actingintemperately. It is not a situation in which one risks falling below even aminimal level of such goods.

The evidence in the Lawsis similarly inconclusive. Here there is nospectre of the good person on the rack, just a sober discussion amongwould-be legislators about the best laws to institute for a real, soon-to-befounded city, in contrast to the ideal city of the Republic.

A numberof passages in *Laws660e–663d* would seem to support the sufficiencythesis.Furthermore, we are told, the main goal of the legislators is toinstill virtue in the citizens (*631a)*, and in particular to cultivate their attitudes towards the external goods of health, wealth, and so on – here called‘human goods’, in contrast with the ‘divine goods’ of wisdom, temperance,courage and justice *(631b–d).*

Nonetheless, the message that the legislator is supposed to teach the citizens is notthat the divine goods are all oneneeds in order to be happy. It is rather that the human goods depend onthe divine ones: health and wealth and the like are not good unless guidedby the wisdom that informs the virtues *(661c).* This amounts at most tothe necessity thesis, not the sufficiency thesis.

As city planners, the legislators in the Lawsare quite naturally concerned with ensuring that the citizens will be adequately supplied with thehuman goods. The ‘great benefits’ they supply to the citizens include thehuman goods (*631b).* These include an adequate food supply, sufficientprivate property, and honour (as reflected, for example, in funeral ritesand interactions between generations).Even though they aim to protectthe citizens against the corrupting effects of excessive quantities of suchgoods,the legislators can hardly use as a guiding principle for theirlegislation the maxim that human beings can achieve happiness even without the ‘human goods’. To the extent that such a principle is true, it appliesto individual persons, not to a polisor other community.

Plato’s Socrates in the Republicand the Athenian in Lawsadopt apolitical rather than individual approach to raising ethical questions.Instead of focusing on an individual person’s question, ‘How do I becomegood?’ or ‘How do I become happy?’, they take the perspective of thestatesman or legislator concerned with how to make the citizens good andhappy. Given this perspective, it is unlikely that either work is conceivedby Plato as addressing the question: can a virtuous person be happy even ifhe lacks the external goods? Without good reason to suppose that Plato isaddressing this question, we should be wary of trying to divine his answerto it. For similar reasons, we should be wary of finding an answer to thisquestion in the Euthydemus, where Socrates’ goal is to exhort us to careabout philosophy and virtue, or in the Gorgias, where Plato’s project is toestablish the importance of cultivating knowledge and self-control. Giventhese purposes, either the necessity thesis or the sufficiency thesis will do.

We may conclude that although Plato’s ethical philosophy paves theway to raising the question of whether the external goods are necessary forhappiness, he himself fails to articulate the question or to address it in anyof his works. It remains for his philosophical successors to engage in thatdebate.

2.3- ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

"Every craft and every inquiry, and similarly every action and project, seems to aim at some good; hence the good has been well defined as that at which everything aims."

The book which Aristotle opens with this trenchant sentence is traditionally known as the Nicomachean Ethics (it was either dedicated to or edited by Aristotle's son Nicomachus), but its subject matter is declared to be "politics." And the work which is called the Politics is presented as the sequel to the Ethics. Both are concerned with the practical science of human happiness in which we study what happiness is, what activities it consists in, and how to become happy. The Ethics shows us what form and style of life are necessary to happiness, the Politics what particular form of constitution, what set of institutions, are necessary to make this form of life possible and to safeguard it. But to say only this is misleading. For the word πολιτικς does not mean precisely what we mean by political; Aristotle's word covers both what we mean by political and what we mean by social and does not discriminate between them. The reason for this is obvious.

In the small-scale Greek city-state, the institutions of the polis are both those in which policy and the means to execute it are determined and those in which the face-to-face relationships of social life find their home. In the assembly a citizen meets his friends; with his friends he will be among fellow members of the assembly. There is a clue here to the understanding of parts of the Ethics which later on we shall have to follow up. For the moment we must return to the first sentence.

Good is defined at the outset in terms of the goal, purpose, or aim to which something or somebody moves. To call something good is to say that it is under certain conditions sought or aimed at. There are numerous activities, numerous aims, and hence numerous goods. To see that Aristotle is completely right in establishing this relationship between being good and being that at which we aim, let us consider three points about the use of the word good. First, if I aim at something, try to bring about some state of affairs, that I so aim is certainly not sufficient to justify my calling whatever I aim at good; but if I call what I aim at good, I shall be indicating that what I seek is what is sought in general by people who want what I want. If I call what I am trying to get good–a good cricket bat or a good holiday, for example–by using the word good, I invoke the criteria characteristically accepted as a standard by those who want cricket bats or holidays. That this is genuinely so is brought out by a second point: to call something good and to allow that it is not a thing which anyone who wanted that sort of thing would want would be to speak unintelligibly. In this good differs from red. That people in general want or do not want red objects is a contingent matter of fact; that people in general want what is good is a matter of the internal relationship of the concept of being good and being an object of desire. Or to make the same point in a third way: if we were trying to learn the language of a strange tribe, and a linguist asserted of one of their words that it was to be translated by good, but this word was

never applied to what they sought or pursued, although its use was always accompanied, say, by smiles, we should know a priori that the linguist was mistaken.

"*If, then, there is some one goal among those which we pursue in our actions, which we desire for its own sake, and if we desire other things for its sake, and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else–in that case we should proceed to choose ad infinitum, so that all desire would be empty and futile –it is plain that this would be the good and the best of goods."*

Aristotle's definition of the supreme good leaves it open for the moment whether there is or is not such a good. Some medieval scholastic commentators, doubtless with an eye to theological implications, rewrote Aristotle as if he had written that everything is chosen for the sake of some good, and that therefore there is (one) good for the sake of which everything is chosen. But this fallacious inference is not in Aristotle. Aristotle's procedure is to inquire whether anything does in fact answer to his description of a possible supreme good, and his method is to examine a number of opinions which have been held on the topic. Before he does this, however, he issues two warnings. The first is to remember that every sort of inquiry has its own standards and possibilities of precision. In ethics we are guided by general considerations to general conclusions, which nonetheless admit of exceptions.

Courage and wealth are good, for example, but wealth sometimes causes harm and men have died as a result of being brave. What is required is a kind of judgment altogether different from that of mathematics. Moreover, young men will be no good at "politics": they lack experience and hence they lack judgment. I mention these dicta of Aristotle only because they are so often quoted; certainly there is something very middle-aged about the spirit which Aristotle breathes. But we ought to remember that what we have now is the text of lectures, and we ought not totreat what are clearly lecturer's asides as if they are developed arguments.

Aristotle's next move is to give a name to his possible supreme good: the name Eudaimonia is badly but inevitably translated by happiness, badly because it includes both the notion of behaving well and the notion of faring well. Aristotle's use of this word reflects the strong Greek sense that virtue and happiness, in the sense of prosperity, cannot be entirely divorced. The Kantian injunction which a million puritan parents have made their own, "Do not seek to be happy, seek to be deserving of happiness," makes no sense in this context. Once again the change of language is also a change of concepts. In what does Eudaimonia consist? Some say in pleasure, some say in wealth, some say in honor and reputation; and some have said that there is a supreme good over and above all particular goods which is the cause of their being good. Aristotle dismisses pleasure rather brusquely at this point–

"The many in choosing a life fit for cattle exhibit themselves as totally slavish"–but later on he is to deal with it at great length. Wealth cannot be the good, for it is only a means to an end; and men prize honor and reputation not as such, but they prize being honored because they are virtuous. So honor is envisaged as a desirable by-product of virtue. Does happiness, then, consist

in virtue? No, because to call a man virtuous is to talk not of the state he is in, but of his disposition. A man is virtuous if he would behave in such and such a way if such and such a situation were to occur. Hence a man is no less virtuous while asleep or on other occasions when he is not exercising his virtues. More than this, however, a man can be virtuous and wretched and such a man is certainly not Eudaimon.

Aristotle at this point challenges not merely the Kantians and the puritans to come, but also the Platonists. Plato in both the Gorgias and the Republic looked back to Socrates and asserted that "it is better to suffer tortures on the rack than to have a soul burdened with the guilt of doing evil." Aristotle does not confront this position directly: he merely emphasizes that it is better still both to be free from having done evil and to be free from being tortured on the rack. The fact that, strictly speaking, what Aristotle says and what Plato says are not inconsistent could be misleading. The point is that if we begin by asking for an account of goodness which is compatible with the good man suffering any degree of torture and injustice, the whole perspective of our ethics will be different from that of an ethics which begins from asking in what form of life doing well and faring well may be found together. The first perspective will end up with an ethics which is irrelevant to the task of creating such a form of life. Our choice between these two perspectives is the choice between an ethics which is engaged in telling us how to endure a society in which the just man is crucified and an ethics which is concerned with how to create a society in which this no longer happens. But to talk like this makes Aristotle sound like a revolutionary beside Plato's conservatism. And this is a mistake. For, indeed, Plato's memory of Socrates insures that even at his worst he has a deep dissatisfaction with all actually existing societies, while Aristotle is in fact always extremely complacent about the existing order. And yet Aristotle is at this point in his argument far more positive than Plato. "No one would call a man suffering miseries and misfortunes happy, unless he were merely arguing a case."

Plato's making goodness independent of any this-worldly happiness follows, of course, from his concept of the good as well as from his memories of Socrates. It is this concept of the good which Aristotle now proceeds to attack. For Plato the word good's paradigmatic meaning is given by considering it as the name of the Form of the Good; consequently, good is a single and unitary notion. Of whatever we use it, we ascribe the same relationship to the Form of the Good. But in fact we use the word in judgments in all the categories–of some subjects, such as god or intelligence, of the mode of a subject, how it is, the excellence it has, its possession of the right amount of something, its existence in the right time or place for something, and so on. Moreover, on the Platonic view everything that falls under a single Form should be the subject of a single science or inquiry; but things that are good are dealt with by a number of sciences– such as, for example, medicine and strategy. Thus Aristotle argues that Plato cannot account for the diversity of uses of good. Moreover, the phrases Plato uses to explain the concept of the Form of the Good are not in fact explanatory. To speak of the good "itself" or "as such" does not clearly add anything to good. To call the Form eternal is misleading: that something lasts forever does not

render it any the better, any more than long-enduring whiteness is whiter than ephemeral whiteness. Moreover, knowledge of Plato's Form is of no use to those in fact engaged in the sciences and crafts in which goods are achieved; they appear to be able to do without this knowledge perfectly well. But the heart of Aristotle's criticism of Plato is in the sentence: "For even if there is some unitary being which is the good, predicated of different things in virtue of something they share or existing separated itself by itself, plainly it would not be something to be done or attained by a man; but it is something which is just that which we are now looking for." That is, good in the sense in which it appears in human language, good in the sense of that which men seek or desire, cannot be the name of a transcendental object. To call a state of affairs good is not necessarily to say that it exists or to relate it to any object that exists, whether transcendental or not; it is to place it as a proper object of desire. And this brings us back to the identification of the good with happiness in the sense of Eudaimonia.

That happiness is the final end or goal, the good (and that more than a name is involved here), appears from considering two crucial properties which anything which is to be the final end must possess, and which happiness does in fact possess. The first of these is that it must be something which is always chosen for its own sake and never merely as a means to something else. There are many things which we can choose for their own sake, but may choose for the sake of some further end. But happiness is not among these. We may choose to pursue intelligence, honor, pleasure, wealth, or what we will for the sake of happiness; we could not choose to pursue happiness in order to secure intelligence, honor, pleasure, or wealth. What sort of "could not" is this? Clearly, Aristotle is saying that the concept of happiness is such that we could not use it of anything but a final end. Equally, happiness is a self-sufficient good; by self-sufficiency Aristotle intends that happiness is not a component in some other state of affairs, nor is it just one good among others. In a choice between goods, if happiness were offered along with one but not the others, this would always and necessarily tilt the scales of choice.

Thus, to justify some action by saying "Happiness is brought by this" or "Happiness consists in doing this" is always to give a reason for acting which terminates argument. No further why? can be raised. To have elucidated these logical properties of the concept of happiness is not, of course, to have said anything about what happiness consists in. To this Aristotle turns next.

In what does the final end of a man consist? The final end of a flute player is to play well, of a shoemaker to make good shoes, and so on. Each of these kinds of man has a function which he discharges by performing a specific activity and which he discharges well by doing whatever it may be well. Have men therefore a specific activity which belongs to them as men, as members of a species, and not merely as kinds of men? Men share some capacities, those of nutrition and growth, with plants, and others, those of consciousness and feeling, with animals. But rationality is exclusively human. In man's exercise of his rational powers therefore the specific human activity consists, and in the right and able exercise of them lies the specific human excellence.

Aristotle advances this argument as though it were obvious, and against the background of the general Aristotelian view of the universe it is obvious. Nature is composed of well-marked and distinct kinds of being; each of these moves and is moved from its potentiality to that state of activity in which it achieves its end. At the top of the scale is the Unmoved Mover, thought unchangingly thinking itself, to which all things are moved. Man, like every other species, moves toward his end, and his end can be determined simply by considering what distinguishes him from other species. Given the general vision, the conclusion appears unassailable; lacking it, the conclusion appears highly implausible. But very little in Aristotle's argument is affected by this. For when he proceeds to his definition of the good, he depends only on the view that rational behavior is the characteristic exercise of human beings, in the light of which any characteristically human good has to be defined. The good of man is defined as the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, or if there are a number of human excellences or virtues, in accordance with the best and most perfect of them. "What is more, it is this activity throughout a whole life. One swallow does not make a summer, nor one fine day. **So one good day or short period does not make a man blessed and happy."**

Happy, that is, is a predicate to be used of a whole life. It is lives that we are judging when we call someone happy or unhappy and not particular states or actions. The individual actions and projects which make up a life are judged as virtuous or not, and the whole as happy or unhappy. We can see, says Aristotle, the connection between happiness thus understood and all those things which are popularly thought to constitute happiness: virtue, though not man's final end, is an essential part of the form of life that is; pleasure is taken by a good man in virtuous activity, and hence pleasure rightly comes in; a modicum of external goods is needed for characteristic human well-being and well-doing; and so on.

We have two large questions on our agenda as a result of Aristotle's definition of the good for man. There is the question to be answered at the end of the Ethics as to the activity in which the good man will be chiefly employed. And there is the question of the excellences, of the virtues, which he has to manifest in all his activities. When Aristotle proceeds to the discussion of the virtues he subdivides them in accordance with his division of the soul. Aristotle's use of the expression soul is quite different from Plato's.

For Plato soul and body are two entities, contingently and perhaps unhappily united. For Aristotle the soul is form to the body's matter. When Aristotle speaks of the soul we could very often retain his meaning by speaking of personality. Thus, nothing peculiar to the Aristotelian psychology turns on his distinction between the rational and non-rational parts of the soul for this is simply a contrast between reasoning and other human faculties. The non-rational part of the soul includes the merely physiological as well as the realm of feelings and impulses. These latter can be called rational or irrational insofar as they accord with what reason enjoins, and their characteristic excellence is to so accord.

There is no necessary conflict between reason and desire, such as Plato envisages, although Aristotle is fully aware of the facts of such conflicts. We therefore exhibit rationality in two kinds of activity: in thinking, where reasoning is what constitutes the activity itself; and in such activities other than thinking where we may succeed or fail in obeying the precepts of reason. The excellences of the former Aristotle calls the intellectual virtues; of the latter, the moral virtues. Examples of the former are wisdom, intelligence, and prudence; of the latter, liberality and temperance.

Intellectual virtue is the consequence usually of explicit instruction; moral, of habit. Virtue is not inborn, but a consequence of training. The contrast with our natural capacities is plain: first we have the natural capacity, and then we exercise it; whereas with virtues we acquire the habit by first performing the acts. We become just men by performing just actions, courageous by performing courageous actions, and so on. There is no paradox here: one brave action does not make a brave man. But continuing to perform brave actions will inculcate the habit in respect of which we call not merely the action but also the man brave.

Pleasures and pains are a useful guide here. Just as they can corrupt us by distracting us from habits of virtue, so they can be used to inculcate the virtues. For Aristotle one sign of a virtuous man is that he gets pleasure from virtuous activity, and another is that he knows how to choose among pleasures and pains. It is this matter of virtue as involving choice that makes it clear that virtue cannot be either an emotion or a capacity.

We are not called good or bad, we are not praised or blamed, by reason of our emotions or capacities. It is rather what we choose to do with them that entitles us to be called virtuous or vicious. **Virtuous choice is choice in accordance with a mean.**

This notion of the mean is perhaps the single most difficult concept in the Ethics. It will be most conveniently introduced by an example. The virtue of courage is said to be the mean between two vices–a vice of excess, which is rashness, and a vice of deficiency, which is cowardice. A mean is thus a rule or principle of choice between two extremes. Extremes of what? - Of emotion or of action. In the case of courage, I give way too much to the impulses which danger arouses when I am a coward, too little to them when I am foolhardy. Three obvious objections at once arise. The first is that there are many emotions and actions for which there cannot be a "too much" or a "too little." Aristotle specifically allows for this. He says that a man "can be afraid and be bold and desire and be angry and pity and feel pleasure and pain in general, too much or too little"; but he says also that malice, shamelessness, and envy are such that their names imply that they are evil, so also with actions such as adultery, theft, and murder. But Aristotle states no principle which will enable us to recognize what falls in one class, what in the other. We can, however, attempt to interpret Aristotle at this point and try to state the principle implicit in his examples.

If I merely ascribe anger or pity to a man, I thereby neither applaud nor condemn him. If I ascribe envy, I do so condemn him. Those emotions of which there can be a mean–and the actions which correspond to them–are those which I can characterize without any moral commitment. It is where I can characterize an emotion or action as a case of anger or whatever it is, prior to and independently of asking whether there is too much or too little of it, that I have a subject for the mean. But if this is what Aristotle means, then he is committed to showing that every virtue and vice are mean and extreme for some emotion or concern with pleasure and pain characterizeable and identifiable in non-moral terms. Just this is what Aristotle sets out to show in the latter part of Book II of the Ethics. Envy, for example, is one extreme, and malice another, of a certain attitude to the fortunes of others. The virtue which is the mean is righteous indignation. But this very example brings out a new difficulty in the doctrine. The righteously indignant man is one who is upset by the undeserved good fortune of others (this example is perhaps the first indication that Aristotle was not a nice or a good man: the words "supercilious prig" spring to mind very often in reading the Ethics). The jealous man has an excess of this attitude–he is upset even by the deserved good fortune of others; and the malicious man is alleged to have a defect here in that he falls short of being pained–he takes pleasure.

But this is absurd. The malicious man rejoices in the ill-fortune of others. Thus what he rejoices in is not the same as what the jealous and the righteously indignant man are pained by. His attitude cannot be placed on the same scale as theirs, and only a determination to make the schematism of mean, excess, and defect work at all costs could have led Aristotle to make this slip.

Perhaps with a little ingenuity Aristotle could be emended here so as to save his doctrine. But what of the virtue of liberality? The vices here are prodigality and meanness. Prodigality is excess in giving, deficiency in getting, and meanness is excess in getting, deficiency in giving. So these are not after all excess or defect of the same emotion or action. And Aristotle himself half admits that to the virtue of temperance and the excess of profligacy there is no corresponding defect. "Men deficient in the enjoyment of pleasures scarcely occur." Thus the doctrine finally appears as at best of varying degrees of usefulness in exposition, but scarcely as picking out something logically necessary to the character of a virtue.

Moreover, there is a falsely abstract air about the doctrine. For Aristotle does not, as he might seem to, think that there is one and only one right choice of emotion or action, independent of circumstances. What is courage in one situation would in another be rashness and in a third cowardice. Virtuous action cannot be specified without reference to the judgment of a prudent man– that is, of one who knows how to take account of circumstances. Consequently, knowledge of the mean cannot just be knowledge of a formula, it must be knowledge of how to apply the rules to choices. And here the notions of excess and defect will not help us. A man who is suspicious of his own tendency to indignation will rightly consider how much envy and malice there is in it; but the connection of envy and malice with indignation is that in the one case I

evince a desire to possess the goods of others, and in the other I evince a desire for the harm of others.

What makes these wrong is that I desire that what is not mine should be mine, without thought for the deserts of others or myself, and that I desire harm. The viciousness of these desires is in no way due to their being excess or defect of the same desire, and therefore the doctrine of the mean is no guide here. But if this classification in terms of the mean is no practical help, what is its point? Aristotle relates it to no theoretical account of, for example, the emotions, and it therefore appears more and more as an arbitrary construction. But we can see how Aristotle may have arrived at it. For he may have examined everything commonly called a virtue, looked for a recurrent pattern, and thought that he had found one in the mean. The list of virtues in the Ethics is not a list resting on Aristotle's own personal choices and evaluations. It reflects what Aristotle takes to be "the code of a gentleman" in contemporary Greek society. Aristotle himself endorses this code. Just as in analyzing political constitutions he treats Greek society as normative, so in explaining the virtues he treats upper-class Greek life as normative. And what else could we have expected? To this there are two answers. The first is that it would be purely unhistorical to look in the Ethics for a moral virtue such as meekness, which enters only with the Christian gospels, or thrift, which enters only with the puritan ethics of work, or for an intellectual virtue such as curiosity, which enters self-consciously with systematic experimental science. (Aristotle himself, in fact, exhibited this virtue, but perhaps could not have envisaged it as a virtue.) Yet this is not good enough as an answer, for Aristotle was aware of alternative codes. There is in Aristotle's Ethics not merely a contempt for the morality of artisans or of barbarians, but also a systematic repudiation of the morality of Socrates. It is not just that the undeserved suffering of the good man is never attended to. But when Aristotle considers justice he so defines it that the enactments of a state are unlikely to be unjust provided that they are properly enacted, without undue haste and in due form. It cannot therefore–generally speaking–be just to break the law. Moreover, in the discussion of the virtues, the defect of the virtue of truthfulness is the vice of the self-deprecator irony. Thus at every point where a reference to Socrates occurs in Aristotle we find none of Plato's respect, although a deep respect for Plato himself is shown. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that what we see here is Aristotle's class-bound conservatism silently and partisanly rewriting the table of the virtues, and so from yet another point of view suspicion is cast upon the doctrine of the mean.

The detail of Aristotle's account of particular virtues is rendered with brilliant analysis and perceptive insight, especially in the case of courage. It is much more, as I have just suggested, the list of virtues which raises questions. The virtues discussed are courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, greatness of soul, good temper or gentleness, being agreeable in company, wittiness, and lastly, modesty, which is treated as not a virtue, but akin to one. Of these, greatness of soul is to do in part with how to behave to one's social inferiors, and liberality and magnificence concern one's attitudes to one's wealth. Three of the other virtues have to do with what are sometimes called manners in polite society.

Aristotle's social bias is thus unmistakable. This bias would not matter philosophically but for the fact that it prevents Aristotle from raising the questions, how do I decide what is in fact included in the list of the virtues? Could I invent a virtue? is it logically open to me to consider a vice what others have considered a virtue? And to beg these questions is to suggest strongly that there just are so many virtues–in the same sense that at a given period there just are so many Greek states.

Aristotle's account of the particular virtues is preceded by an account of the concept of voluntary action, necessary, as he says, because it is only to voluntary actions that praise and blame are assigned. Hence, on Aristotle's own premise, only in voluntary actions are virtues and vices manifested. Aristotle's method here is to give criteria for holding an action to be non-voluntary.

An action is non-voluntary when it is done under compulsion or in ignorance. Compulsion covers all cases when the agent is really not an agent at all. The wind carries his ship somewhere, for example. Actions can also be non-voluntary where other people have the agent in their power, but actions done under threat of one's parents or one's children being put to death are borderline cases. They satisfy the ordinary criteria of voluntary actions in that they are deliberately chosen. But no one apart from such special circumstances would deliberately choose to act as he would under such threats. In some cases we allow the circumstances to be an excuse, in others not. As an example of the latter, Aristotle cites our attitude to the character of Alcmaeon in Euripides' play, who murders his mother under threats.

Aristotle is careful to point out that the fact that I am motivated in some particular way never entails that I am compelled. If I could allow that my being moved by pleasure or for some noble end was enough to show that I was compelled, then I could not conceive of an action which could not be shown by this or a similar argument to be compulsory. But the whole point of the concept of being compelled is to distinguish actions which we have chosen on the basis of our own criteria, such as the pleasure we shall get or the nobility of the object, from those things we do in which our own choice was not part of the effective agency. Thus, to include too much under the heading of compulsion would be to destroy the point of the concept.

In the case of ignorance Aristotle distinguishes the non-voluntary from the merely not voluntary. For an action to be non-voluntary through ignorance, the discovery of what he has done must cause the agent pain and a wish that he had not so acted. The rationale of this is clear. A man who, having discovered what he has unwittingly done, says, "But if I had known, that is just what I would have chosen to do" thereby assumes a kind of responsibility for the action, and so cannot use his ignorance to disclaim such responsibility. Aristotle next distinguishes actions done in a state of ignorance, such as when drunk or raging, from actions done through ignorance, and points out that moral ignorance–ignorance of what constitutes virtue and vice–is not exculpatory, but is indeed what constitutes vice. The ignorance which is exculpatory is that through which a particular action is done, which would otherwise not have been done, and it is ignorance as to the particular circumstances of the particular action. The examples of such

ignorance are various. A man may not know what he is doing, as when someone tells of a matter which he does not know is a secret and so does not know that he is revealing something hidden. A man may mistake one person for another (his son for an enemy) or one thing for another (a harmless weapon for a deadly one). A man may not realize that a medicine is in this type of case deadly, or how hard he is hitting. All these types of ignorance are exculpatory, for it is a necessary condition of an action being voluntary that the agent knows what he is doing.

What is most worth remarking on here is Aristotle's method. He does not begin by looking for some characteristic of voluntary action which all voluntary actions must have in common. He rather looks for a list of characteristics any one of which would if present in an action, be sufficient to withdraw the title "voluntary" from it. An action is treated as voluntary unless done through compulsion or ignorance. Thus Aristotle never gets involved in the riddles of later philosophers about free will. He delineates the concepts of the voluntary and the involuntary as we possess them, and brings out the point about them that they enable us to contrast those cases where we admit the validity of excuses and those cases where we do not. Because this is so, Aristotle only raises marginally–in discussing our responsibility for our own character formation–the question which has haunted modern free-will discussions, Is it possible that all actions are determined by causes independent of the agent's deliberations and choices, so that no actions are voluntary? For Aristotle, even if all actions were somehow thus determined, there would still be a distinction between agents acting under compulsion or through ignorance and agents not so acting. And Aristotle would surely be right about this. We should not be able to escape his distinction no matter what the causation of action might be.

What does emerge about voluntary action in a positive sense is that choice and deliberation have a key role in it. The deliberation which leads up to action always concerns means and not ends. This is yet another Aristotelian saying which may mislead us if we read it anachronistically. Some modern philosophers have contrasted reason and emotion or desire in such a way that ends were merely the outcome of non-rational passions, while reason could calculate only as to the means to attain such ends. We shall see later on that Hume took such a view. But this view is alien to Aristotle's moral psychology. Aristotle's point is a conceptual one. If I in fact deliberate about something, it must be about alternatives. Deliberation can only be as to things which are not necessarily and inevitably what they are, and as to things which are within my power to alter. Otherwise there is no room for deliberation. But if I choose between two alternatives, then I must envisage something beyond these alternatives in the light of which I make my choice, that for the sake of which I shall choose one rather than another, that which provides me with a criterion in my deliberation. This will in fact be what in that particular case I am treating as an end. It follows that if I can deliberate about whether or not to do something, it will always be about means that I am deliberating in the light of some end. If I then deliberate about what was in the former case the end, I shall now be treating it as a means, with alternatives, to some further end. Thus, necessarily, deliberation is of means, not of ends, without there being any commitment to a moral psychology of a Humean kind.

The form of the deliberation involved Aristotle characterizes as that of the practical syllogism. The major premise of such a syllogism is a principle of action to the effect that a certain sort of thing is good for, befits, satisfies a certain class of person. The minor premise is a statement, warranted by perception, that here is some of whatever it is; and the conclusion is the action. An example which, although its content is mysterious, makes the form of the practical syllogism clear is given by Aristotle: Dry food is good for man–major premise; Here's some dry food–minor premise; and the conclusion is that the agent eats it. That the conclusion is an action makes it plain that the practical syllogism is a pattern of reasoning by the agent and not a pattern of reasoning by others about what the agent ought to do. (That is why a second minor premise–e.g., And here is a man–would be redundant, and indeed misleading, since it would distract from the point.) Nor indeed is it a pattern of reasoning by the agent about what he ought to do. It is not to be confused with perfectly ordinary syllogisms, whose conclusion is a statement of that order. Its whole point is to probe the sense in which an action may be the outcome of reasoning.

A probable first reaction to Aristotle's account will fasten upon just this point. How can an action follow from premises as a conclusion? Surely only a statement can do that. To remove this doubt, consider some possible relations between actions and beliefs. An action can be inconsistent with beliefs in a way analogous to that in which one belief can be inconsistent with another. If I assert that all men are mortal, and that Socrates is a man, but deny that Socrates is mortal, I become unintelligible in my utterance; if I assert that dry food is good for man, and I am a man, and I assert that this is dry food, and I do not eat it, my behavior is analogously unintelligible. But perhaps the example is bad. For it may be that I can provide an explanation which will remove the apparent inconsistency. How? By making another statement, such as that I am not hungry, having just finished gorging myself on dry food, or that I suspect that this dry food is poisoned. But this strengthens, not weakens the parallel with ordinary deductive reasoning. If I allow that a warm front's approach causes rain, and that a warm front is approaching, but deny that it is going to rain, I can remove the appearance of inconsistency in this case also by making some further statement, such as that before the warm front reaches here it will be intercepted. So that actions can be consistent and inconsistent with beliefs in much the way that other beliefs can be. And this is because actions embody principles. It is in holding this that Aristotle lays himself open to the charge of "intellectualism." To understand this charge, let us consider it first in a crude form and then in a more sophisticated one.

The crude version of the attack is that made by Bertrand Russell.It is because his actions embody principles, conform or fail to conform to precepts of reason in a way that those of no other species do, that Aristotle defines man as a rational animal. Russell's comment upon this is to invoke the history of human folly and irrationality: men just are not rational in fact. But this is to miss Aristotle's point massively. For Aristotle is in no sense maintaining that men always act rationally, but that the standards by which men judge their own actions are those of reason. To call human beings irrational, as Russell rightly does, is to imply that it makes sense and is appropriate to judge men as succeeding or failing in the light of rational standards, and when

Aristotle calls men rational beings, he is simply pointing out the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the application of predicates which refer to such standards.

However, Aristotle is committed to more than this. For he has to maintain that men characteristically act rationally, and what this implies is that the concept of human action is such that unless a piece of behavior fulfills some elementary criterion of rationality, it does not count as an action. That is, unless implicit in the behavior there is a purpose of a recognizably human kind, unless the agent knows under some description what he is doing, and unless we can detect some principle of action in his behavior, what we have is not an action at all, but merely a bodily movement, perhaps a reflex, only to be explained in terms of other bodily movements, such as those of muscles and nerves. That Aristotle is right about this appears if we consider another kind of criticism of his intellectualism, implied in the injunctions of all those moralists who believe that reason is a misleading guide, that we should rely on instinct or on feeling. This appeal to feeling as a moral guide is central to the Romantic period; it emerges again in modern times in the appeal to dark, visceral emotion of D. H. Lawrence's Mexican period; and in its most detestable form it is expressed in the Nazi cry to think with the blood. But these injunctions are intelligible only because they are backed up by reasons; and these reasons are usually assertions to the effect that too much reasoning leads to a calculating, insufficiently spontaneous nature, that it inhibits and frustrates. In other words, it is argued that our actions, if the product of too much calculation, will exhibit undesirable traits or will produce undesirable effects. But to argue like this is to meet Aristotle on his own ground. It is to suggest that there is some criterion or principle of action which cannot be embodied in deliberate action, and thus that deliberate action would be to that extent irrational. And to argue thus is to accept, not to dissent from, a central thesis of Aristotle's rationalism.

Does Aristotle in any case believe that every human action is preceded by an act of deliberation? Clearly if he does believe this, what he believes is false. But he does not. It is only acts which are chosen (in a specially defined sense of chosen which involves deliberation) which are preceded by deliberation, and Aristotle says explicitly that "not all voluntary actions are chosen." What does follow from Aristotle's account is that we can assess every action in the light of what would have been done by an agent who had in fact deliberated before he acted. But this imagined agent cannot, of course, just be any agent. He has to be prudent . Prudence is the virtue of practical intelligence, of knowing how to apply general principles in particular situations. It is not the ability to formulate principles intellectually, or to deduce what ought to be done. It is the ability to act so that principle will take a concrete form. Prudence is not only itself a virtue, it is the keystone of all virtue. For without it one cannot be virtuous. A man may have excellent principles, but not act on them. Or he may perform just or courageous actions, but not be just or courageous, having acted through fear of punishment, say. In each case he lacks prudence. Prudence is the virtue which is manifested in acting so that one's adherence to other virtues is exemplified in one's actions.

Prudence is not to be confused with a simple faculty for seeing what means will bring about a given end. Aristotle denominates that particular faculty cleverness and holds that it is morally neutral, since it is of equal use to the man who pursues praiseworthy and to the man who pursues blameworthy ends. Prudence includes cleverness; it is the cleverness of the man who possesses virtue in the sense that his actions always flow from a practical syllogism whose major premise is of the form "Since the end and the best thing to do is. . . . " It is a conjunction of a grasp of the true τλος of men with cleverness. For Aristotle the role of intelligence is to make articulate principles on which a man whose natural dispositions are good will have already been acting unconsciously, so that we are less likely to make mistakes; the role of prudence is to know how a given principle (which will always be of a certain degree of generality) applies in a given situation. There is, therefore, after all a point in the argument at which Aristotle clashes with irrationalists such as D. H. Lawrence and with Tolstoy. For Aristotle holds that an explicit and articulate grasp of principle will help to insure the right sort of conduct, while Lawrence's praise of spontaneity and Tolstoy's adulation of peasant ways of life rest on the contention that being explicit and articulate about principles is morally crippling. This clash has more than one root. To a certain extent Aristotle and Lawrence or Tolstoy disagree as to what the right sort of conduct is; and to a certain extent they disagree about what the actual consequences of being articulate are. But once again we must note that although one can be a Lawrentian or a Tolstoyan without inconsistency, what one cannot consistently do is to offer an explicit and articulate rational defense of their doctrines. And the fact that both Lawrence and Tolstoy exhibited all the intellectualism which they used their intellectual resources to condemn strongly suggests that an Aristotelian position of some sort is unavoidable. Moreover, it is only when one is explicit and articulate about principle that one is able to mark clearly the cases where one has failed to do what one should have done. And because this is such a strong point in favor of Aristotle's position, we may well be puzzled that for Aristotle failure constitutes a problem. But it does.

Aristotle begins from Socrates' positionthat nobody ever fails to do what he thinks to be best. If a man does anything, then his doing it is sufficient to show that he thought it the best thing to do. Consequently moral failure is logically impossible. This, says Aristotle, flies in the face of the facts. But, for Aristotle, that men should fail to do what they believe they ought to do still constitutes a problem.

His explanations are several. A man may, for example, know what he ought to do, in the sense of being committed to a principle of action, but ignore his principle because he is not exercising his knowledge, as may happen when a man is drunk or mad or asleep. So a man carried away may do what in one sense he knows he ought not to do. Or a man may fail to recognize an occasion as one appropriate to the application of one of his principles. What we need to underline here is, however, not the adequacy of Aristotle's explanations. We can set out a wide range of different kinds of case in which there is a gap between what an agent professes and what he does. What is interesting, however, is that Aristotle, and in this he is very close to Socrates, feels that there is something special to be explained in the facts of moral weakness or failure, that such weakness

or failure constitutes a problem. This suggests strongly that Aristotle's initial assumption is that men are rational beings in a much stronger sense than we have hitherto ascribed to him.

For the suggestion is that if men always did what they thought best, there would be nothing to explain. Yet any account of men as agents which only introduces the facts of weakness and failure by a kind of afterthought is bound to be defective for human desires are not straightforward drives to unambiguous goals in the way that biological instincts and drives are. Desires have to be given goals, and men have to be trained to reach them, and the point of having principles is in part to detect and diagnose failure in the attempt to reach them. Thus fallibility is central to human nature and not peripheral to it. Hence the portrait of a being who was not liable to error could not be the portrait of a human being. The portrait of the Jesus of the Gospels needs the temptations in the wilderness and the temptation in Gethsemane in order that we can be shown, at least in the intention of the authors, not merely a perfect man, but a perfect man.

Aristotle's halfhearted admission of fallibility is connected not merely with a philosophical blindness to the importance of this human characteristic but also with a moral attitude to prosperity of a kind that can only be called priggish. This emerges clearly in the course of his account of the virtues. Aristotle's list of virtues falls clearly into two parts, a division obviously not perceived by Aristotle himself. There are, on the one hand, traits such as courage, restraint, and agreeableness which it is hard to conceive of as not being valued in any human community. Even these, of course, fall on a scale. At one end of this scale there are norms and traits which could not be disavowed totally in any human society, because no group in which they were absent could fall under the concept of a society. This is a matter of logic. When Victorian anthropologists sailed round the world they reported the recurrence of certain norms in all societies as an empirical generalization, just as a comparative anatomist might report similarities in bone structure. But consider the case of truth telling. It is a logically necessary condition for any group of beings to be recognized as a human society that they should possess a language. It is a necessary condition for a language to exist that there should be shared rules, and shared rules of such a kind that an intention to say that what is, is can always be presumed. For if when a man said, "It is raining" we could not have such a presumption, then what he said would not communicate anything to us at all. But this presumption, necessary for language to be meaningful, is only possible where truth telling is the socially accepted and recognized norm. Indeed, lying itself is only possible where and on the assumption that men expect the truth to be told. Where there is no such expectation, the possibility of deception disappears too. Thus the recognition of a norm of truth telling and of a virtue of honesty seems written into the concept of a society.

Other virtues, although not logically necessary to social life, are obviously causally necessary to the maintenance of such life, given that certain very widespread and elementary facts about human life and its environment are what they are. Thus the existence of material scarcity, of physical dangers, and of competitive aspirations bring both courage and justice or fairness on the scene. These are virtues which, given such facts, appear to belong to the form of human life as

such. Other virtues again appear unavoidable for recognition by any society in which fairly widespread human desires are present. There can be exceptions, but as a matter of fact they will be rare. So agreeableness is a general human virtue, although we may come across an occasional people, such as the bad-tempered Dobuans, who may not rate it as such. But toward the other end of the scale there are virtues which are more or less optional, so to speak, which belong to particular contingent social forms, or which are matters of purely individual choice. The non-Aristotelian, but Christian virtues of loving one's enemies and of humility, with the practice of turning the other cheek, appear to belong in the latter category; the English and much more Aristotelian public school virtue of being "a gentleman" in the former.

These differences Aristotle does not recognize, and so we find side by side in Aristotle's list virtues which anyone would find it hard not to recognize as virtues and alleged virtues which are difficult to comprehend outside Aristotle's own social context and Aristotle's own preferences within that context.

The two Aristotelian virtues which demand attention in this respect are those of "the great-souled man" and of justice. The great-souled man "claims much and deserves much." It is for Aristotle a vice to claim less than you deserve, just as much as it is to claim more. It is particularly in relation to honor that the great-souled man claims and deserves much. And since the great-souled man has to deserve most, he must have all the other virtues too. This paragon is extremely proud. He despises honors offered by common people. He is gracious to inferiors. He repays benefits so as not to be put under obligations, and "when he repays a service, it is with interest, for in this way the original benefactor will become the beneficiary and debtor in turn." He speaks his mind without fear or favor, because he has a poor opinion of others and would not care to conceal his opinion. He runs into few dangers, because there are few things which he values and would wish to preserve from harm.

It is because Aristotle conceives of him as not failing that Aristotle endows the great souled man with no sense of his own fallibility. The great-souled man's characteristic attitudes require a society of superiors and inferiors in which he can exhibit his peculiar brand of condescension. He is essentially a member of a society of unequals. In such a society he is self-sufficient and independent. He indulges in conspicuous consumption, for "he likes to own beautiful and useless things, since they are better marks of his independence." Incidentally, he walks slowly, has a deep voice and a deliberate mode of utterance. He thinks nothing great. He only gives offense intentionally. He is very nearly an English gentleman.

This appalling picture of the crown of the virtuous life has an almost equally distressing counterpart in one aspect of Aristotle's account of justice. Much of what Aristotle says about justice is illuminating and far from objectionable. He distinguishes between distributive justice–fairness–and the corrective justice which is involved in redress for a harm done. He defines distributive justice in terms of the mean: "To do injustice is to have more than one ought, and to suffer it is to have less than one ought," and justice is the mean between doing injustice and

suffering it. But when Aristotle comes up against the use of meaning either "fair" or "right," or "in accordance with the laws," he asserts without argument that although everything unlawful is unfair, everything unfair is unlawful. It is less clear in the Ethics than it is in the Politics that Aristotle is prepared to believe that the positive laws of existing states can be more than marginally a variance with what is fair and right. "The laws aim either at the common interest of all, or at the interest of those in power determined in accordance with virtue or in some such way; so that in one sense we call just anything that effects or maintains the happiness or the components of the happiness of the political community." Aristotle goes on to describe the law as enjoining virtue and forbidding vice, except where it has been carelessly enacted. And this must remind us of Aristotle's complacency with the existing social arrangement. It is perhaps no accident that he also believes that some men are slaves by nature.

By contrast, Aristotle appears to advantage in his inclusion of friendship as among the necessities of the man who achieves or is to achieve the good. He distinguishes the varieties of friendship –those between equals and unequals; those based on shared pleasure, mutual usefulness, or common virtue–and produces a typical catalogue, whose details perhaps matter less than the fact that the discussion is there at all. But the self-sufficiency of Aristotle's ideal man deeply injures and deforms his account of friendship. For his catalogue of types of friend presupposes that we can always ask the questions, on what is this friendship based?for the sake of what does it exist? There is therefore no room left for the type of human relationship of which it would miss the point totally to ask on what it was based, for the sake of what it existed. Such relationships can be very different: the homosexual love of Achilles for Patroclus, or of Alcibiades for Socrates; the romantic devotion of Petrarch to Laura; the marital fidelity of Sir Thomas More and his wife. But none of these could be included in the Aristotelian catalogue. For the love of the person, as against the goodness, pleasantness, or usefulness of the person, Aristotle can have no place. And we can understand why when we remember the great-souled man. He admires all that is good, so he will admire it in others. But he needs nothing, he is self-contained in his virtue. Hence friendship for him will always be a kind of moral mutual admiration society, and this is just the friendship which Aristotle describes. And this again illuminates Aristotle's social conservatism. How could there be an ideal society for a man for whom the ideal is as ego centered as it is for Aristotle?

The exercise of virtue is, of course, for Aristotle not an end in itself. Virtues are dispositions which issue in the types of action which manifest human excellence. But the injunctions "Be virtuous," "Be courageous," "Be great-souled," "Be liberal" do not tell us what to do in the sense of what to aim at; they rather tell us how we should behave in the pursuit of our aim, whatever it is. But what should that aim be?

A claim which Aristotle takes with immense seriousness, but nonetheless finally dismisses, is that of pleasure. On this subject he has to argue against two kinds of opponent. Speusippus, who was Plato's immediate successor as head of the Academy, had argued that pleasure was in no sense a good. Eudoxus the astronomer, who was also a pupil of Plato, held by contrast that

pleasure was the supreme good. Aristotle wished to deny the position of Speusippus without laying himself open to Eudoxus' arguments. His arguments for the goodness of pleasure, or at least for the goodness of some pleasures, are partly a refutation of Speusippus' position. To argue, for example, that pleasures are bad because some are harmful to health is like arguing that health is an evil because sometimes the pursuit of health conflicts with the pursuit of wealth. More positively, Aristotle points to the fact that everyone pursues pleasure as evidence that it is a good, and he advances another argument to the effect that pleasure is taken in what he calls unimpeded activity. By unimpeded activity he means activity which achieves its end, which is well done.

Everybody, he argues, takes pleasure in unimpeded activity; everybody wishes his activities to be unimpeded; everybody therefore must see pleasure as a good. But in fact pleasure appears to be common to all forms of activity, and to be the only factor common to all; Aristotle finds himself for a moment close to the position of Eudoxus, and some scholars have held that in Book VII of the Ethics this is the position which he in fact takes. But, in Book X at any rate, he produces arguments against this Eudoxian position.

We take pleasure in what we do well (unimpeded activity again), and thus taking pleasure in an activity is a criterion of doing it as we wish to do it, of achieving the reason of that action. We would get pleasure is always a reason for acting, even if not always a finally conclusive one. Pleasure, too, is not only sought by almost everybody, and therefore appears to be a universal reason but it cannot be a means to anything else. We do not seek pleasure for the sake of anything further to be got out of it. At the same time, pleasure has characteristics that make it appear not to be a reason. It does not complete or terminate an activity; that is, the pleasure we get from doing something is not a sign that we have reached our goal and should therefore stop. Rather, getting pleasure is a reason for continuing the activity. Moreover, there is no particular action or set of actions which can be specified as ways of getting pleasure. Pleasure comes from many different kinds of activity, and so to say that pleasure was the reason would not of itself ever give us a reason for choosing one of those kinds of activity rather than another. But to do this is the function of a reason. And finally the pleasure that we take in an activity cannot be identified separately from the activity itself; to enjoy or take pleasure in doing something is not to do something and to have an accompanying experience of something else which is the pleasure. To enjoy playing a game is not to play the game, and in addition, to experience some sensations, say, which are the pleasure. To enjoy playing a game is simply to play well and not to be distracted, to be, as we say, thoroughly involved in the game. Thus we cannot identify pleasure as a reason external to the activity, to which the activity is a means. Pleasure, says Aristotle, in a memorable but unhelpful phrase supervenes on the reason "like the bloom on the cheek of youth."

Different activities, different pleasures; which activities then are the activities of the good man? "If happiness consists in activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be activity in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be the virtue of what is best in us."

What is best in us is reason and the characteristic activity of reason is that speculative reasoning which deals with unchanging truths. Such speculation can be a continuous and pleasant–it is, Aristotle says brusquely, "the pleasantest"–form of activity. It is a self-sufficient occupation. It has no practical outcome, so it cannot be a means to anything else. It is an activity of leisure and peace time, and leisure is the time when we do things for their own sake, since business affairs are for the sake of leisure and war is for the sake of peace. Above all, since it is concerned with what is unchanging and timeless, it is concerned with the divine. Aristotle follows Plato and much else in Greek thought in equating changelessness and divinity.

Thus, surprisingly, the end of human life is metaphysical contemplation of truth. The treatise which began with an attack on Plato's conception of the Form of the Good ends not so far away from the same attitude of contempt for the merely human. External goods are necessary only to a limited extent, and the wealth required is only moderate. Thus the whole of human life reaches its highest point in the activity of a speculative philosopher with a reasonable income. The banality of the conclusion could not be more apparent.

Why then is it reached? One clue is in Aristotle's concept of self-sufficiency. A man's activities in his relations with other men are for Aristotle in the end subservient to this. Man may be a social-cum-political animal, but his social and political activity is not what is central. Yet who can live with this degree of leisure and wealth and this degree of disengagement from affairs outside himself? clearly only a few people. This however could not appear as an objection to Aristotle: "For it is the nature of the many to be moved by fear, but not a sense of honor, to abstain from what is bad not on account of its baseness but for fear of the penalties; for, living on their emotions, they pursue the appropriate pleasures and the means to these pleasures, and avoid the opposite pains, but they lack even a concept of the noble end of true pleasure, never having tasted it." So, Aristotle concludes, they could not be attracted or changed by ethical theorizing. The tone is that of Plato's Laws.

Aristotle's audience, then, is explicitly a small leisured minority. We are no longer faced with a reason for human life as such, but with a reason for one kind of life which presupposes a certain kind of hierarchical social order and which presupposes also a view of the universe in which the realm of timeless truth is metaphysically superior to the human world of change and sense experience and ordinary rationality. All Aristotle's conceptual brilliance in the course of the argument declines at the end to an apology for this extraordinarily parochial form of human existence. At once the objection will be made: this is to judge Aristotle against the background of our values, not of his. It is to be guilty of anachronism. But this is not true. Socrates had already presented an alternative set of values in both his teaching and his life; Greek tragedy presents other, different possibilities; Aristotle did not choose what he chose for lack of knowledge of alternative views of human life. How, then, are we to understand this union in the Ethics of philosophical acumen and social obscurantism? To answer this we must look at his work in a wider perspective.

CHAPTER THREE- CONSEQUENTIALIST/TELEOLOGICAL ETHICS

3.1- Consequentialism as a Theory

Traditionally many ethicists have contended that moral rightness must be determined by appeal to the consequences of an action. If the consequences are good, the act is right. If the consequences are bad, the act is wrong. Thus, a consequentialist theory measures the morality of an action on the basis of the nonmoral consequences. Consequentialists consider the ratio of good to evil that an action produces. The right action is the one that produces, will probably produce, or is intended to produce at least as great a ratio of good to evil as any other action. The wrong action is the one that does not.

For example, suppose that while driving down an almost deserted street one night, you momentarily take your eyes off the road and then strike a parked car. You stop and cautiously look around. There's no one in sight, and no house lights are on. Using a flashlight, you estimate the damage to the parked car at about $200. You'd like to leave a note on the windshield, but you don't have insurance or the money to pay for the damage. Besides, the parked car is a new Corvette and you assume that the owner must have insurance.

If you were a consequentialist, in determining what you should do, you'd evaluate the nonmoral consequences of the two choices. If you left a note, you would probably have to pay for the damage. That would greatly complicate your life: you'd have to work to pay off the debt, let other expenses slide, greatly reduce your luxuries, and possibly need to quit school. In contrast, if you don't leave a note, you might go unpenalized while the owner foots the bill. Of course, the owner is likely to be hopping mad, perhaps even deciding to treat other motorists spitefully. Furthermore, you may be found out; that could mean considerable trouble. This is a consequentialist analysis.

An obvious question arises here: In evaluating the nonmoral consequences of an action, whom do consequentialists have in mind? Clearly, if you evaluate the consequences just for yourself in the preceding illustration, you would likely make a different judgment than if you evaluate the consequences for the Corvette's owner. In deciding what to do, then, should we evaluate the consequences only for ourselves, or should we consider the effects on all people involved? The answers to these questions form the bases for two consequential theories which we will discuss later in this chapter namely, egoism and utilititarianism. But before that let's try to get an understanding of the pleasure principle which is the basis for consequentialism.

3.2- Hedonism

The simplest theory of value is hedonism, which holds that only pleasure is intrinsically good and only pain intrinsically evil. Hedonism was defended in theancient world by Epicurus and criticized by Plato and Aristotle; it was also defended by the classical utilitarians, notably Jeremy Bentham and Henry Sidgwick,and retains adherents today.

It is a simple theory because it restricts good and evil to the one dimension offelt pleasure and pain, so there is only the one intrinsic good and one intrinsicevil.Despite its simplicity, hedonism can be formulated in different ways, depending, first, on how the concept of pleasure is understood. One view identifiespleasures as sensations with an introspectible quality of pleasantness and pains asones with the contrary quality of painfulness; this leads to a version of hedonismin which the only values are feelings with these introspectible qualities. Againstthis view it is sometimes objected that there are no such qualities; there is nofeeling in common between, say, the pleasure of drinking beer and that of solvinga crossword puzzle. But the view's defenders can reply that the quality of pleasantness is never experienced alone. Pleasurable sensations always have other introspectible qualities that make them as wholes very different, but they share thequality of pleasantness and can be ranked in pleasantness, just as we can rank theloudness of sounds that differ radically in pitch and timbre. A rival view identifies pleasures as those sensations people want to have andto continue having just for their qualities as sensations.

It is not clear, however,that this view successfully picks out only pleasures; can someone not want the360 the oxford handbook of ethical theorysensation of redness just as that sensation? In addition, the view seems to pointbeyond hedonism to the more general theory that the good is whatever peopledesire, regardless of whether it is a sensation. Nonetheless,a second version of hedonism identifies its good as a sensation people want justfor its qualities as a sensation.

However it understands pleasure, hedonism normally values both of what canbe called simple and intentional pleasures. Simple pleasures are unstructured sensations with whatever feature makes them pleasures; they include, most notably,bodily pleasures such as those of taste and touch. Intentional pleasures, by contrast, are directed at an intentional object; one is pleased by something or thatsomething is the case, for example, that one's friend got a promotion. Intentionalpleasures are more complex than simple ones and raise more complex moralissues; I will discuss some of these hereafter. But both types are pleasures and canbe compared for their degrees of pleasantness.

To yield determinate value-judgments, hedonism must be able to measurequantities of pleasure and pain. There are several dimensions to this measurement.If pleasures are discrete sensations, it is better to have more than fewer of themand also better to have ones that last for a longer time. In addition, it is betterto have pleasures that are more intense, just as it is worse to have more intensepains. But there are different views about how the intensities of these two states compare. The most common view, held for example byBentham and Sidgwick, treats pleasure and pain symmetrically, so a pain of agiven intensity is always exactly as evil as a pleasure of the same intensity is good.

But a different view holds that pain is a greater evil than pleasure is a good. Itsmost extreme version holds that pleasure is not good at all, but this implies thata life with many intense pleasures and only a few mild pains is on balance notworth living. A more moderate version

holds, more plausibly, only that pain ofa given intensity is worse than pleasure of the same intensity is good, so it is moreimportant to prevent the pain than to provide the pleasure. (This gives pain somepriority over pleasure, but not infinite priority.) And this view can be extendedto give disproportionate weight to more intense pains, so that given an intensepain for one person and two pains of just over half the intensity for two otherpeople, it is more important to relieve the one intense pain. Within the generalframework of hedonism, this view attaches the greatest ethical significance to veryintense pains.

A final issue concerns the related concepts of happiness and suffering. Thoughhappiness is a more inclusive concept than pleasure—to call someone happy isto say more than that he is experiencing some pleasurable sensation now—somephilosophers define it in terms of pleasure, so a happy life is one with a clearpreponderance of pleasures over pains. But others treat happiness as a distinctstate, one involving a feeling of satisfaction with one's life as a whole, in at leastmost aspects and including the past and future as well as the present; an analogous view equates suffering or despairwith dissatisfaction with one's life as a whole. Some who take this view treathappiness as the central hedonic value, so what is to be promoted is not individualpleasurable feelings but this more general state of life-satisfaction. But within aframework that values sensations, it is hard to see the rationale for this view. Ifhappiness is good feeling about one's life as a whole, why should it count morethan similar feelings with other intentional objects or with no objects at all?

Happiness may be more stable than other good feelings, but that does not makeit intrinsically more important. And the same is certainly true of bad feelings.Though despair about one's life as a whole is certainly an evil, no one would onthat basis deny that intense bodily pain is comparably evil.

Hedonism is persuasive when it says that pleasure is a good and pain an evil,but its stronger claim that these are the only intrinsic values has met with manyobjections. One is that hedonism can count as morally ideal a life containing onlymindless pleasures and none of the higher achievements in art, science, and personal relations that are the distinctive prerogative of human beings. This objectionhas been raised in fiction, from the lotus-eaters of Homer'sOdysseytoAldousHuxley'sBrave New World; it is also expressed in Robert Nozick's fantasy of an"experience machine" that, by electrically stimulating the brain, can give one theillusion and therefore the pleasure of any activity even though one is not actuallyengaged in it. While hedonism implies that a life spententirely on the experience machine would be ideal, Nozick and others find itdeeply impoverished. A second objection is that hedonism gives positive value topleasures that are morally vicious. If a torturer takes sadistic pleasure in his victim's pain, hedonism says this makes the overall situation better than if the torturer were indifferent to the pain or, worse, pained by it. But surely it is compassion that is good and sadism that is bad. Those who are persuaded by these objections may adopt a rival"perfectionist" theory that values human excellences or perfections such as knowledge, difficult achievements, and moral virtue instead of or as well as pleasure.

Two psychological theses about motivation have sometimes been put forward as having particularly important, perhaps disastrous, consequences for moral philosophy. These are psychological egoism and psychological hedonism. Psychological egoism(PE) is the thesis that each person is motivated, ultimately, onlyby self-interest (alternatively: selfish desires). According to this theory one might on occasion do things which are in the interests of others, but in every case this will be only as a meansto one's own self-interest. In such cases one can be said to desire the wellbeing of others, but only as a means to one's own well-being.

According to the psychological egoist, the only thing one desires as an end(or, for itself) is one's own self-interest. Psychological hedonism(PH) is the thesis that each person is motivated, ultimately, onlyby the desire for his own pleasure (understood as including the aversion to pain). One could be a psychological egoist without being a psychological hedonist, provided one had a notion of 'self-interest' that included more than just maximization of the balance of pleasure over pain for oneself (or a notion of 'selfish' that could apply to other desires than the desires to get pleasure and avoid pain for oneself). For example, such a psychological egoist might hold that success of some sort was an important ingredient in self-interest (or that the desire for success was selfish), but without thinking that success had to be regarded merely as something one desires as a means to pleasurable sensations and experiences. Hence, psychological egoism does not automatically entail psychological hedonism. On the other hand, psychological hedonism looks like it should be an instance of psychological egoism. The desire for one's own pleasure looks like a sufficiently selfish motivation to count as egoistic.

Psychological egoism and psychological hedonism are motivational, and hence psychological, theses. They are descriptive in the sense that they try to describe what it is that always motivates people. These descriptive thesesare not to be confused with the following normative ethical theories:

(a) Ethicalegoism: the normative ethical theory that the only feature making one's act right is its maximizing one's ownself-interest (in comparison with the other acts available).

(b) Ethicalhedonism: the normative ethical theory that the only feature making one's act right is its maximizing the balance of pleasure over pain for oneself (in comparison with the other acts available).

Each of the above ethical theses claims that a certain feature and only that feature can justify acting. Both theses claim to give the sole grounds relevant to the issue of how one ought to act. By contrast psychologicalegoism and psychological hedonism claim to describe how we actually do act and what motivates us. They say that we do act in these ways, not necessarily that we should.

Perhaps it is even too strong to say they are theories about how we do act. The psychological egoist does not have to claim that each individual will always do the act which is the most in his

self-interest. It must be very rare that one is so lucky as to do just that. At best, he will say, one does the act one believesis most in his own self-interest.

But a psychological egoist doesn't even have to say that. Most psychological egoists admit that we can fail to do even what we believe to be most in our own self-interest, because of such things as weakness of will, irrationality, etc. But even in those sorts of cases, the psychological egoist will insist that all of our desires are selfish or self-interested ones, even if these do not always lead us to act in the optimally self-interested manner. Likewise a psychological hedonist doesn't have to say we will always do the act which in fact will maximize our own pleasure-over-pain balance, or even that we will always do the act we believe has this feature. But he will say that all the motivations we have are either desires for pleasure and the avoidance of pain or else are desires for the means to these things. There are no other motivations that are not reducible to these.

3.3-Egoism

3.3.1- Cynicism and Cyrenacism

Cynics

Although the Cynics had an impact on moral thinking in Athens after the death of Socrates, it is through later, and highly controversial, reports of their deeds and sayings — rather than their writings — that we know of them. Diogenes the Cynic, the central figure, is famous for living in a wine jar (Diogenes Laertius and going about with a lantern looking for 'a man' — i.e., someone not corrupted. He claimed to set courage over against fortune, nature against convention, and reason against passion. Of this trio of opposites, the most characteristic for understanding the Cynics is nature against convention. Diogenes taught that a life according to nature was better than one that conformed to convention. First of all, natural life is simpler. Diogenes ate, slept, or conversed wherever it suited him and carried his food around with him. When he saw a child drinking out of its hand, he threw away his cup, saying that a child had bested him in frugality. He said the life of humans had been made easy by the gods but that humans had lost sight of this through seeking after honeyed cakes, perfumes, and similar things. With sufficient training the life according to nature is the happy life.

Accordingly Diogenes became famous for behavior that flouted convention. Still, he thought that the simple life not only freed one from unnecessary concerns but was essential to virtue. Although he says nothing specific about the virtues, he does commend training for virtuous behavior. His frugality certainly bespeaks self-control. He condemned love of money, praised good men, and held love to be the occupation of the idle.

Besides his contempt for convention, what is most noteworthy about Diogenes as a moral teacher is his emphasis on detachment from those things most people consider good. In this emphasis,

Diogenes seems to have intensified a tendency found in Socrates. Certainly Socrates could be heedless of convention and careless about providing for his bodily needs. To Plato, however, Diogenes seemed to be Socrates gone mad. Still, in Diogenes' attitude, we can see at least the beginning of the idea that the end of life is a psychological state marked by detachment. Counseling the simple and uncomplicated satisfaction of one's natural instincts and desires, Diogenes urges detachment from those things held out by convention to be good. While he is not so explicit, others develop the theme of detachment into the notion of tranquility. The Stoics and Epicureans hold that happiness depends on detachment from vulnerable or difficult to obtain bodily and external goods and consists in a psychological state more under one's own direct control. In this way, happiness becomes associated (for the Epicureans) with tranquility (*ataraxia*). Finally, in Skepticism, suspension of judgment is a kind of epistemic detachment that provides tranquility. So in Diogenes we find the beginnings of an idea that will become central to later ancient moral theory.

Cyrenaics

The first of the Cyrenaic school was Aristippus, who came from Cyrene, a Greek city on the north African coast. The account of his teachings, in Diogenes Laertius, can seem sometimes inconsistent. Nevertheless, Aristippus is interesting because, as a thorough hedonist, he is something of a foil for Epicurus. First of all, pleasure is the end or the goal of life — what everyone should seek in life. However, the pleasure that is the end is not pleasure in general, or pleasure over the long term, but immediate, particular pleasures. Thus the end varies situation by situation, action by action. The end is not happiness because happiness is the sum of particular pleasures. Accumulating the pleasures that produce happiness is tiresome. Particular pleasures are ones that are close-by or sure. Moreover, Aristippus said that pleasures do not differ from one another, that one pleasure is not more pleasant than another. This sort of thinking would encourage one to choose a readily available pleasure rather than wait for a “better” one in the future. This conclusion is reinforced by other parts of his teaching. His school says that bodily pleasures are much better than mental pleasures. While this claim would seem to contradict the idea that pleasures do not differ, it does show preference for the immediately or easily available pleasures of bodily gratification over, e.g., the mental pleasure of a self-aware just person. In fact, Aristippus' school holds that pleasure is good even if it comes from the most unseemly things. Aristippus, then, seems to have raised improvidence to the level of a principle.

Still, it is possible that the position is more than an elaborate justification for short-sighted pleasure-seeking. Cyrenaics taught that a wise man (*sophos*) (one who always pursues immediate gratification) will in general live more pleasantly than a foolish man. That prudence or wisdom (*phronêsis*) is good, not in itself but in its consequences, suggests that some balance, perhaps even regarding others, is required in choosing pleasures. The Cyrenaic attitude to punishment seems to be an example of prudence. They hold that nothing is just, fine, or base by nature but only by convention and custom; still a good man will do nothing out of line through fear of

punishment. Finally, they hold that friendship is based in self-interest. These aspects of Cyrenaic teaching suggest they are egoist hedonists. If so, there are grounds for taking the interest of others into account as long as doing so is based on what best provides an individual pleasure.

Nevertheless, Aristippus' school holds that the end of life is a psychological good, pleasure. Still, it is particular pleasures not the accumulation of these that is the end. As a consequence, their moral theory contrasts sharply with others in antiquity. If we take the claims about the wise man, prudence, and friendship to be references to virtue, then Aristippus' school denies that virtue is indispensable for achieving the end or goal of life. While they hold that virtue is good insofar as it leads to the end, they seem prepared to dispense with virtue in circumstances where it proves ineffective. Even if they held virtue in more esteem, the Cyrenaics would nonetheless not be eudaimonists since they deny that happiness is the end of life.

3.3.2- Epicureanism and Stoicism

EPICURUS AND THE LIFE OF PLEASURE

The period after the death of Aristotle in 322/3 b.c.e. is called the Hellenistic period because it coincided with the 'Hellenization' of much of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world by the conquests of Alexander the Great.

After Alexander's death (coincidentally in the same year as Aristotle, who had been his boyhood tutor), the lands he had conquered were divided up into three 'empires' – that of the Ptolmaies in Egypt, the Seleucids in a vast area from Turkey to Afghanistan, and the Antigonids in Macedon. These empires introduced Greek language, culture, and political institutions to the lands they controlled and promoted them over the indigenous languages and cultures. Greek became the international language and the language of all educated persons. During this period Athens continued to be the philosophical centre to which intellectuals flocked from all corners of the now greatly enlarged Greek-speaking world. One of these was Epicurus (341–271 b.c.e.), son of expatriate Athenian parents. Although born during Aristotle's lifetime, he first came to Athens more than a decade after the philosopher's death. Here he purchased a property that came to be known as 'the Garden', where he lived with a tightly knit community of friends and followers. The Garden was a centreof philosophical activity on a par with the Academy, founded by Plato, and the Lyceum founded by Aristotle. In contrast with these older schools, however, the Garden had a closed, cultish flavour, since Epicurus advocated withdrawal from much of the business and preoccupations of public life. Before arriving in Athens, Epicurus had founded similar communities elsewhere.

In contrast with Plato and Aristotle, who considered philosophy to be an esoteric discipline requiring expertise in specialized disciplines such as logic or 'dialectic', Epicurus insists that philosophy is in principle quite simple and accessible. The central truths one must grasp are

about the natural world, and the point to learning them is quite practical. The goal of philosophy is, quite simply, to produce happiness (eudaimonia).

Like all philosophers of his era, Epicurus understands the notion of eudaimoniaaccording to Aristotle's clarification: it is the ultimate goal (telos) of life, that for the sake of which we do everything we do, and which we do not pursue for the sake of anything else. Epicurus calls this goal the 'starting point (archê) for every choice and avoidance' (Men. 128– 9). Thus Epicurus and later philosophers agree on the central question in ethics: *"We are investigating . . . what is the final and ultimate good? This, in the opinion of every philosopher, is such that everything else is for the sake of it while it is not itself for thesake of anything."*

According to Epicurus, the answer to this question is 'pleasure'.Epicurus' reason for taking the telosto be pleasure is quite simple. Itrequires no argument, he claims, to see that pleasure is to be pursued and pain avoided. These facts are as evident to the senses as the fact that fire is hot or snow is white. Pleasure is naturally 'congenial' to us. It is thus our natural goal.

We can see that our natural inclination is to pursue pleasure and avoid pain, Epicurus and his followers maintain, because it is exhibited by all animals (including ourselves) right from birth: Every animal as soon as it is born seeks pleasure and rejoices in it, while shunning pain as the highest evil and avoiding it as much as possible. This is behaviour that has not yet been corrupted, when nature's judgment is pure and whole.

Birth is supposed to be the best time to see our natural inclinations in their uncorrupted form because they have not yet been influenced by learning or by any factors other than nature. On this, both Epicureans and their opponents agree. Indeed, it was the practice of most philosophical schools in the Hellenistic period to 'visit the cradle' in support of their claims about the goal of life, from which such arguments have come to be dubbed 'cradle arguments'.

According to Epicurus, it is not only in infancy that we 'recognize [pleasure] as our first innate good'. We continue to pursue pleasure as our ultimate goal throughout life, although we develop many mistaken views that impede our pursuit of it Thus the task of philosophy is to clear away those mistaken views and allow us to pursue our natural goal successfully and without impediment.

This is not to say, Epicurus and his followers hasten to add, that we never knowingly choose to do anything painful or burdensome, or that we indulge in every opportunity for pleasure that comes our way. Far from it, he claims. The intelligent pursuit of pleasure will often involve forgoing pleasures or enduring pains voluntarily since it is the **pleasant life**we pursue, not just the pleasant moment, we must take both the long- and short-term consequences of our choices into consideration. In illustration of this aspect of the Epicurean view, Cicero gives the following anecdote:

Timotheus . . . after dining . . . with Plato and being much delighted with the entertainment said, when he saw him the next day: ‘Yourdinners are indeed delightful, not only at the time, but on the following day as well.’ The wise person’s choices will thus follow the principle that ‘pleasures are to be rejected when this results in other greater pleasures; pains are selected when this avoids worse pains’. In taking long-term pleasure and pain into consideration, the Epicureans distinguish themselves from their hedonist rivals the Cyrenaics, who advocated pursuit of the present pleasure.

A further feature that distinguishes the Epicureans from other hedonists is a distinction they make between types of pleasures. On the one hand, they claim, there is the familiar sort of pleasure ‘which stirs our naturewith its sweetness and produces agreeable sensations in us’. It‘arouses the senseswhen experienced and floods them with a delightfulfeeling’ Epicurus classifies this type of pleasure as ‘kinetic’ (kinêtikê). It is to be contrasted with a very different kind of pleasure, which he calls ‘static’ (katastêmatikê). The latter pleasure is ‘what one feels when all pain is removed’. Although our sources sometimes abbreviate the definition of katastematic pleasure to ‘the absence of pain’, the full and proper account is that it is the feeling or awareness of that absence of pain. Otherwise, it would entail that inanimate things and the dead would be having pleasures. Pleasure is a feature of experience, as both the Epicureans and their critics are well aware.

Although this is not how the term ‘pleasure’ (hedonêin Greek, Latinvoluptas) is ordinarily used, the Epicureans argue that experiencing the absence of pain is no less a pleasure than is feeling a delightful sensation: When we are freed from pain, we take delight in that very liberation and release from all that is distressing. Now everything in which one takes delight is a pleasure (just as everything that distresses one is a pain). And so every release from pain is rightly termed a pleasure. For example, being thirsty is a pain or discomfort. Drinking when thirsty is a kinetic pleasure. The condition of not being thirsty – that is, of not experiencing the pain of thirst, is a static pleasure. In every case in which a pain is removed, a static pleasure results.

Thus there is no intermediate condition between feeling pain and feeling pleasure: ‘whoever is to any degree conscious of how he is feeling must to that extent be feeling either pleasure or pain’.

According to the Epicureans, experiencing the absence of pain is not only a pleasure, it is indeed a greater pleasure than kinetic pleasures: ‘the absence of all pain [Epicurus] held to be not only true pleasure, but the highest (summam) pleasure’. This is not to say that static pleasure is more pleasant than kinetic pleasure when measured on the same scale. Rather, he thinks, the two types of pleasure cannot be compared on the same scale at all. This is because kinetic pleasure admits of both increase and diminution, while static pleasure does not.

We can appreciate this point as follows. When one is feeling pained or distressed, this distress will be lessened as each pain is eliminated, but once all pain has been removed, one has achieved the upper limit (peras) of ‘freedom from pain’. The sorts of kinetic pleasures one experiences en

route to this freedom from pain, or subsequent to achieving it, will only ‘vary’, but not increase the static pleasure. For example, one can achieve freedom from the bodily distress of hunger and thirst by eating bread and water, or by consuming Champagne and caviar. But neither of these very different ‘kinetic’ routes to the condition of bodily satisfaction produces any greater freedom from the pains of hunger and thirst than the other. Similarly, once one is no longer hungry and thirsty, one might enjoy the further kinetic pleasures of listening to music, or smelling flowers, or engaging in philosophical discussion. But none of these very different pleasant experiences will make the person who experiences them any morefree from hunger or thirst.

For these reasons, Epicurus claims that static pleasure constitutes the ‘limit (horos) of the magnitude of pleasure’.Kinetic pleasure, by contrast, has no intrinsic limit .

Static rather than kinetic pleasure is the goal of life, Epicurus claims. He responds to those who mistakenly characterize his hedonism as advocating a voluptuous and self-indulgent lifestyle:

“When we say that pleasure is the goal we do not mean the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures of consumption, as some believe, either from ignorance and disagreement or from deliberate misinterpretation, but rather the lack of pain in the body and disturbance in the soul.”

Far from being a doctrine of sensual indulgence, Epicureanism is a ‘serious, sober, and severe’ philosophy of life.The fact that the Epicureans identify static rather than kinetic pleasure as the goal of life allows them to defend their view from familiar and powerful objections to hedonism. But, while Epicureans do give reasons to defend their claim that the feeling between kinetic pleasure and pain is a pleasure, we do not have any record of arguments specifically in support of the claim that static, rather than kinetic pleasure is the goalof life. Presumably, they must take the cradle argument to establish this result.

It is commonly objected that the cradle argument fails to establish that freedom from pain is our natural goal. Critics regularly claim that the evidence adduced in the cradle argument, if it shows that we have a natural orientation to pursue pleasure, shows that kinetic pleasure is our goal. So the Cyrenaics assume in their version of the cradle argument.

The criticism, however, is not a fair one. Let us consider the evidence of the ‘cradle’ more carefully. To be sure, the Epicureans allow that we have a natural inclination to pursue kinetic pleasures. And newborn animals do clearly enjoy the kinetic pleasures of eating, drinking and warmth. These kinetic pleasures, however, are also the means of attaining the static pleasure of freedom from the distress of hunger, thirst, and cold. The crucial question for us is, what impels the infant to seek out food, drink, and warmth in the first place? Is it a natural inclination to pursue kinetic pleasures (of which they have no experience), or a natural inclination to recoil from the distress of hunger, thirst, and cold? Newborn behaviour, especially in humans, displays plenty of distress at hunger, thirst, and discomfort. A crying baby needs to be fed, changed, or cuddled. It is entirely reasonable for the Epicureans to claim that what impels the newborn to

seek or demand nourishment and comfort is the pain it feels from being hungry, thirsty, cold, or wet: that the primary impulse manifested by newborns is not an orientation to pursue delightful sensations, but a strong impulse away from bodily pain. A crying infant expresses his hunger, thirst, or other bodily discomfort, and seeks relieffrom these distressing sensations. Indeed the early weeks of infancy are acycle of alternating periods of distress and content – long before the baby expresses anything like delight or enjoyment of the kinetic variety.

Indeed, if we consider the formulation of the Epicurean cradle argumentpreserved in Diogenes Laertius, we can see that his language favours interpreting the pleasure sought by the newborn as freedom from pain, ratherthan kinetic enjoyment:

[Epicurus] uses as proof that the goal is pleasure the fact thatanimals, as soon as they are born are satisfied with it but are in conflict with suffering by nature and apart fromreason. Left to our own feelings, then, we shun pain.

The natural impulse in the cradle is here summed up as an inclination toavoid pain. The pleasures aimed at in the cradle are ones of satisfactionrather than lively sensation. If we grant that a natural impulse away frompain is exhibited in the cradle, Epicurus is correct to conclude that animalsdisplay a natural impulse to pursue static pleasure.

Although the pains experienced in the cradle are all bodily sensations,the Epicureans are well aware that many pains are not bodily. Pain is akind of disturbance or distress, and such distress, they recognize,can occur both in the body and in the mind (or 'soul'). The goalof life is to achieve 'lack of pain in the body and disturbance inthe soul'. Hence the condition of the person who has achievedEpicurean happiness is described as ataraxia (freedom from distress,sometimes rendered as 'tranquility'.

Epicurus identifies the four principal sources of mental distress to which human beings are susceptible as: fear of the gods, fear of death, fear that we won't be able to achieve happiness, and fear that terrible things will befall us. Accordingly, the central piece of his ethical teaching, known as the 'Fourfold remedy', is designed to eliminate these fears:

THE FOURFOLD REMEDY

God presents no fears, death no worries. And while the good is readily attainable, what is terrible is readily endurable.

The Letter to Menoeceusis roughly organized as a presentation of the fourfold remedy: taking first the fear of the gods, second the fear of death and finally the worries about achieving happiness and avoiding evil.Note that the fears addressed in the fourfold remedy do not assume the Epicurean analysis of good and evil – or any other Epicurean doctrine. These are fears that arise for those who are ignorant of Epicurean philosophy. Learning the tenets of that philosophy are the antidote or remedy for those fears.

Epicurus begins his Letter to Menoeceus by urging him (as presumably he did all members of Epicurean communities) to rehearse the philosophical arguments that treat those fears. ‘Do and rehearse what I have been continually declaring to you, believing these to be the elements of living well’. In the Letter to Herodotus, he stresses the importance, for Epicurean practice, of committing to memory certain key doctrines. The recommended philosophical ‘exercise’ is like a meditative or spiritual practice, to be performed individually or in pairs: ‘Practise these and the related precepts day and night, by yourself and with a like-minded friend, and you will never be disturbed either awake or in sleep, and you will live as a god among Men’.

Fear of the gods

The first step of the fourfold remedy addresses the fear of the gods. Popular conceptions of the gods at the time portray them as supernatural beings responsible for natural phenomena – especially impressive or frightening ones such as earthquakes, thunderstorms, and astronomical phenomena. They also take a great interest in human affairs, and visit disaster upon the wicked or the overweening – as well as those who have failed to honourthem properly or have incurred their dislike for some other reason.

It is not easy to predict what will satisfy these gods, who according totradition can sometimes be angered at persons through no fault of their own. To believe in such gods is to consider oneself a relatively small and powerless being in a world where large, powerful and capricious beings demand service and visit calamity upon those with whom they are displeased or against whom they are otherwise motivated to do ill. It is a perspective of extreme vulnerability. Such a set of beliefs about the gods is the source of great fears, but it is quite false, according to Epicurus. While he insists that there are in fact gods and that it is pious to worship them, the gods ‘are not such as the many believe them to be’. Indeed, he goes so far as to claim that the popular conception of the gods is impious.

We can see what Epicurus thinks is wrong with the popular stories about the gods by focusing on what he calls our ‘preconception’ of the gods. This is something like an innate idea or conception of the gods – shared by all human beings, according to Epicurus. While different peoples tell different stories about the gods, the universal conception of the gods on which all agree is that the gods are ‘blessed’ and immortal or imperishable. This core conception of divinity which, according to Epicurus, is our prolêpsis, is due neither to human customs, laws, or institutions, and is therefore a deliverance of nature, to be trusted as true in the same way as the other deliverances of nature – such as those that tell us that pleasure is to be pursued and pain avoided. If we keep this core conception of divinity in mind, we can evaluate the other sorts of claims that are attributed to the gods, rejecting as false all those that are inconsistent with the core conception. As Epicurus writes to Menoeceus: ‘do not attribute to god anything foreign to his indestructibility or repugnant to his blessedness’.

As completely happy beings, the gods, on the Epicurean conception of happiness, are without trouble or disturbance. As such, they will be without anger (which is a disturbance in the soul), and hence without motive to visit retribution on human beings. Indeed, even considering them to be grateful towards or pleased with human beings is inconsistent with their ataraxia– presumably because this implies a priorstate of need or pain which human beings fulfilled with their sacrifices,as well as dependence on humans (either to give them good things orrefrain from doing bad things to them). Anger and gratitude are signs ofweakness and 'imply dependence (prosdêsis) on neighbours'; hence they imply lack of self-sufficiency (autarkeia), which (wewill see) is integral with the Epicurean conception of happiness. The godshave so little need of us, the later Epicurean Lucretius says, that theyhave no incentive to even think of us, let alone create us.

Also inconsistent with divine blessedness is the popular view thatnatural phenomena (meteorological or astronomical) are controlled by thegods. While Epicureans invoke many reasons to be sceptical that the godsare in control of the natural world,the point central to the fourfoldremedy is that conceiving of the gods at work in nature is inconsistentwith their ataraxia.

Thus Epicurean philosophy teaches that a major source of fear in life isunfounded. If we properly understand our natural conception of the gods,we will see that we have no reason to fear them. We need simply to remindourselves of the relevant facts at regular intervals by rehearsing the epitomeof the Epicurean argument captured in the first of the Principal Doctrines:'what is blessed and indestructible has no troubles itself, nor does it givetrouble to anyone else, so that it is not affected by feelings of anger orgratitude'.

Fear of death

The second major source of anxiety addressed by the fourfold remedy isthe fear of death. Unlike the fear of the gods, which we can overcome byrealizing that the stories about divine interference in nature and in humanlives are quite untrue, this fear requires a different strategy for its removal.

While we are wrong to think our well-being is contingent on the whims ofsupernatural deities, we are not mistaken in believing that we are vulnerable to death. 'One can attain security against other things, but when itcomes to death all Men live in a city without walls'. We overcomethe fear of death, according to Epicurus, not by learning that we will neverdie, but by coming to see that death itself is not a bad thing. In thememorable (and to be memorized) dictum, 'Death is nothing to us'.

The argument against this fear in the Letter to Menoeceus issimple and straightforward. In a nutshell:

Get used to believing that death is nothing to us. For all good andbad consists in sense experience, and death is the privation ofsense experience.

The argument consists of two premises from which the famous conclusionfollows:

P1 Anything good or bad to us consists in sense experience.

P2 Death is the privation of sense experience.

C3 Therefore, death is nothing [good or bad] to us.

The first premise P1 relies on Epicurean hedonism, according to whicheven though freedom from distress in the mind as well as the body isthe goal of life, the only proper objects of mental distress have ultimatereference to bodily pain.

The second premise also depends on Epicurean natural philosophy, according to which death occurs when the soul (a collection of especially fineatoms distributed throughout the body) is separated from the body anddisperses It is the soul that gives the body the power ofsensation. When the soul is separated from the body, neither itnor the body retains this power. Thus, as P2 claims, when we die we nolonger have any sensations or experiences.

Since being dead is a condition in which we experience nothing, nothing bad (or for that matter,good) can happen to us when we are dead. So being dead is nothing wehave any reason to dread.

Although the argument, as it is initially stated here in the Letter toMenoeceus, depends on some distinctively Epicurean premises, it hasforce even against those who reject hedonism and the details of the Epicurean physical theory. As long as you believe that nothing good or badcan happen to a person unless it is something he or she experiences (=P1modified), and that when we die, we simply cease to exist (=P2 modified)– from which we can infer that we have no experiences when dead – itfollows that C3: being dead cannot be bad for us. Epicurus himself summarizes the argument in this more general form a little later in the letter:

‘Death. . . is nothing to us; since when we exist, death is not yet present,and when death is present, then we do not exist’. Lucretiusarticulates such a generalized form of the argument:

If there lies ahead misery and suffering for any man, he must be there himself to feel its evil, but since death removes this chance, and by injunction stops all rioting of woes against our state, we may be reassured that in our death we have no cause for fear. We cannot be wretched in non-existence.

The passage in Lucretius goes on to offer the additional consideration:‘when immortal death snatches away a mortal life, it is no different fromnever having been born’.

This epitomizes an additional line of argument developed over 3.830–869,which makes a different use of the claim (P2) that death is simply nonexistence, and does not depend on any version of P1. The argument aimsto show that the non-existence constituted by death is nothing bad to usby inviting us to consider the period of non-existence that precedes a person’s existence.

We do not think that it is a bad thing for us not to existduring this long period before our lives begin, so why should we think thatthe non-existence following our lives is any worse?

This set of considerations, known as the ‘symmetry argument’ is alluded to briefly in passing inthe exposition of Epicurean ethics in Cicero’s On Moral Ends. A personwhose courage is based on Epicurean principles ‘disparages death, in whichone is simply in the same state as before one was born’.

There is no evidence in any of the texts attributed to Epicurus himselfthat he gave such an argument. The symmetry argument is most likely aresponse by later Epicureans to critics of the Epicurean position on death.

The canonical argument given by Epicurus shows that it is a confusion tosuppose that death is bad on the grounds that being dead is a bad thing. Itinvites the objection, however, that this is not why death is to be feared.

The challenge to the objector is to explain what is bad about death. Oneattempt at such an explanation, anticipated and responded to by Epicurus, attempts to locate the badness of death during one’s life:death is painful in anticipation. Epicurus replies that this isfoolish: such painful anticipation (that is, fear) is groundless unless death,when it comes, is something bad, which is precisely what Epicurus contests: ‘that which while present causes no distress causes unnecessary painwhen merely anticipated’.

Epicurus’s own response to such worries, by contrast, is to deny thatthe experiences of which death deprives us would have made our livesany happier. Unlike kinetic pleasures, which have no inherent limit, andof which one can always have more, the pleasure of ataraxiais a limit:the complete absence of pain. Once this has been achieved, it cannot beincreased. In particular, it cannot be increased by duration.

Thus, just asthe Epicurean does not ‘choose the largest amount of food but the mostpleasant’ – that is, he chooses simply enough food to satisfy the basicnatural appetites,so too ‘he savours not the longest time but the mostpleasant’. Thus: unlimited time and limited time contain equal pleasure, if onemeasures its limits by reasoning.

The pleasure that consists in the absence of pain cannot be increased, butonly varied. Given that this type of pleasure is the goal of life, itfollows that our life would not be better (that is, more pleasant) if it waslonger. Once one has reached painlessness, it cannot be made better byincreased duration. Prolonging life may increase our quantity ofkinetic pleasures, and it may increase the length of time for which we arefree from pain, but it does not make us any more free from pain. Thusdeath, whether it comes early or late, is nothing to us.

This response by Epicurus is deeply rooted in the controversial details ofhis hedonism – in particular the view that absence of pain is the greatestpleasure. It will therefore not be convincing

to those who do fail to subscribeto his view of pleasure. By contrast, the symmetry argument employedby his later followers does not rely on any such controversial premises,and thus will be an effective remedy for a wider group of those who sufferfrom the fear of death.

Good is easy to obtain

Having ruled out supernatural sources of evil, and the prospects of evilafter death, the third and fourth remedies in the tetrapharmakonaddressworries a person might have about her prospects for achieving happinessin the natural world and within a human life. The third remedy, capturedin the slogan 'good is easy to obtain', assures us that happiness is withinour reach. We are mistaken to worry that it depends on factors beyondour control. Since the Epicurean considers happiness to consist in freedomfrom pain in the body, along with 'reliable expectation concerning this',the remedy provides us with a simple strategy for freeing the body frompain. Once provided with this foolproof strategy, we lose our grounds forfearing that happiness may elude our grasp.

Central to this strategy is a distinction that Epicurus makes betweentypes of desires, the careful observance of which furnishes us with a 'guidefor good living'.

The distinction invokes two criteria for classifying desires. First of all, desires are either natural or not. Our sources devote little attention to explaining this criterion, whichindicates that it was well understood or at any rate not controversial.

Natural desires are all species of appetites for food, drink, and warmth.Even if our environment, experience, or culture trains and shapes theseappetites, so that we desire particular types of food or drink rather thanothers, it is a function of our nature to desire food and drink in the firstplace. All species of these desires are based at least in part on our nature,which distinguishes them from desires for things that satisfy no natural need– e.g. a desire to live by the ocean or to marry a millionaire. Non-naturaldesires are not contrary to nature; they simply do not aim at satisfying anatural need (endeia).

Within natural desires, the Epicureans make the further distinctionbetween the necessary and the non-necessary. More precisely, these are desires for necessary andunnecessary objects. Necessary desires are for objects such that, if they arenot obtained, the body will be in distress.That is, they are desires for objects that the body needs. Fulfilling a naturaland necessary desire 'removes the feeling of pain owing to want. Examples of such desires are the desire for food whenone is hungry or the desire for drink when one is thirsty. If you are hungrybut get nothing to eat, or thirsty and get nothing to drink, then your bodyis in distress. In fact, that is just what the feelings of hunger and thirstare – feelings of distress or discomfort. The natural and necessary desiresthus turn out to coincide with the 'natural impulses' invoked in the cradleargument.

A natural but unnecessary desire, by contrast, is for a particular kind offood, drink or shelter – for example, the desire to eat an apple, or to drinkspring water. While eating an apple will suffice to alleviate the feeling ofhunger, and while drinking spring water will slake one's thirst, this particular type of food or drink is not necessary to relieve the bodily distress.

The apple relieves hunger because it is food, not because it is the particularkind of food that it is. Thus in desiring to eat an apple, and not just anyfood, one is desiring something that is not necessary for alleviating one'shunger. A banana or a potato, or a gourmet treat would do the job just aswell. Similarly the desire to drink spring water, as opposed to any type ofwater or drink, aims at something that is unnecessary to satisfy the naturalappetite of thirst.

These examples show that what makes a natural desire unnecessary isnot that it is for an extravagant or expensive way of satisfying a bodilyappetite, but rather that it is for a specific way of satisfying it. Naturaland necessary desires are generic: a desire to eat (any food will do), or todrink (any drink will do), or to be warm (any clothing or shelter will do).

The desire to drink Perrier and the desire to drink tap water are equallyunnecessary.Once one understands these distinctions between desires, the Epicureanrecipe for living a happy life is 'simple and direct': restrict yourdesires to those that are natural and necessary. Indeed it is a mark of an unnecessary desire that it can beeliminated. The therapy may be through argument – sinceunfounded opinions are in Epicurus's view the source of both non-naturaldesires as well as unnecessary natural ones. Theremedy may also involve habituation and practice. For example, 'If youtake away the chance to see and talk and spend time with [the beloved],then the passion of sexual love is dissolved'.

Whatever the methodof therapy, the Epicurean agent is instructed to ask, of each of his or herdesires: 'What will happen to me if what is sought by [this] desire isachieved, and what will happen if it is not?'. This is to ask, of eachdesire, whether it is necessary. If bodily pain will result unless the desire issatisfied, then the desire can be kept. Otherwise, it is to be eliminated.

Nature is abundant with the resources to satisfy our natural and necessary desires, Epicurus insists. Thus we can be confident that we will be able to live livesfree from hunger, thirst, and cold. To understand that the freedom frombodily pain required by ataraxiais so easily achieved is to grasp the thirdremedy in the tetrapharmakon: 'the good is easily achieved'. By restrictingone's desires to those objects for which nature supplies abundant resources,Epicurus teaches, one secures for oneself a life free not only from bodilypain, but also, and more importantly, from any need to worry (or fear)that one might experience such pain:The cry of the flesh, not to be hungry, not to be thirsty, not tobe cold. For if someone has these things and is confident of having them in the future, he might contend even with [Zeus] forhappiness.

By following the strategy of pruning away all desires beyond the necessaryand natural, and understanding the rationale behind this, one will havesecured the goal of life, which is to be free

of bodily and mental distress:‘the stable condition (katastêma) of the flesh, and the reliable expectationconcerning this’.

If on the other hand, you cultivate unnecessary desires – such as apreference for gourmet coffee or a vegetarian dietor an Ivy Leagueeducation – then you will be desiring things that you cannot be confidentof securing. You will likely have to go to some trouble and bother (tarachêorponos) to try to secure these objectives, you will be subject to worriesabout whether you will succeed, and you will suffer the pain of disappointment if you fail. Such pain, however, has no bodily basis. It is not the signof any unfulfilled natural need (endeia). The only way to remove the paininvolved in natural needs is to satisfy them. But there are two ways toremove or ward off the mental pain that comes from unfulfilled unnecessary desires. You can fulfill the desire, which is not always easy or withinyour power, or you can remove it. From an Epicurean perspective, thelatter is by far the better strategy to adopt for someone wishing to live ahappy life. As an Epicurean quips: ‘If you wish to make Pythocles wealthy,do not give him more money; rather, reduce his desires’.

It is important to recognize that the Epicurean strategy here is aboutwhich desires to cultivate, rather than which activities to engage in. Epicurusdoes not advise us to abstain from luxuries and delicacies, for example. Hesays simply to make sure that we do not desire them, which is not thesame as desiring not to have them. There are many things that affordconsiderable kinetic pleasure even if one does not desire them. The pointis not, he says, to ‘make do with few things under all circumstances’,but rather to be able, if circumstances provide only limited opportunities,to make do with these without disappointment, dissatisfaction, or regret. Indeed, he claims, the person who does not desire a particular extravagance (e.g. a gourmet meal) gets more kinetic enjoyment fromit than someone who does – presumably because the former lacks thelatter’s anxiety and concern about whether he will get what he desires. The

Epicurean strategy is a matter of cultivating the proper desires by habituation. One should accustom oneself (sunethizein) to simple fare becauseof the bodily health (and resulting lack of pain) that this will produce,and more importantly because this eliminates the desire for special foodsthat exposes one to the possibility of disappointment if such fare is notavailable. It is not with a goal of turning one’s nose up at such opportunities for fine dining that come along.

By restricting our desires to the natural and necessary we achieve whatEpicurus calls autarkeia, or self-sufficiency. To be self-sufficient, as the Epicureans understand it, is to have itentirely in one’s control whether one is happy or not, to have security(asphaleia) against any evil that might befall one.

It is to have the dignity associated with the status of a free(eleutheros) person who controls her own destiny as opposedto being vulnerable or dependent on the whims of fortune or onother forces beyond her control.

This Epicurean promise of invulnerability to disaster is, however, opento the objection that there is a significant class of bodily pains that cannotbe eliminated simply by limiting the scope of our desires. These include,for example, the pains of injury and disease, which can befall us regardlessof how carefully we prune our desires, and which cannot be alleviated bythe simple measures that can relieve the pains involved in our naturalimpulses. To be sure, Epicurus can claim, and implicitly does claim that limiting one's desires and 'accustoming oneself to simplefare' will have considerable health benefits, thus reducing the range ofpainful bodily ailments to which one is susceptible. But he cannot anddoes not claim that such pains are easily eliminated or avoided. Insteadhe offers, in the final remedy of the tetrapharmakon, a strategy for enduring them.

Enduring unavoidable pain

Even the wise man will feel pain, the Epicureans claim – and not only in circumstances in which enduring pain now willresult in future greater pleasures. Sometimes bodily pain is unavoidable;but nonetheless it is to be endured, and can be dealt with in such a waythat it does not diminish a person's happiness. Enduring unavoidablepain is a large part of Epicurean practice, and is the focus of the last itemin the fourfold remedy: 'what is terrible (deinon) is readily endurable(eukartereton)'.

To understand the strategies Epicurus identifies for enduring pain, wemust appreciate two further points about pleasures on which the Epicureans insist. The first is that, despite their insistence that static pleasure(freedom from distress) is greater than kinetic pleasure and is the ultimategoal of life, the Epicureans insist that the life they recommend is in factreplete with kinetic pleasures. The happy life is 'filled with pleasure fromevery source'. The happy person 'experiences a large and continuous variety of pleasures, both of mind and of body'. Theseinclude the pleasures of 'eating, drinking, hearing sweet sounds, andindulging in the more indecent pleasures':

As we have seen, the Epicurean practice of restricting desires is not arecommendation to eschew such pleasures , but rather pavesthe way to getting the maximum enjoyment from them. For these areactivities or experiences from which one can get pleasure even withouthaving an antecedent desire for them. As Epicurus says, 'those who leastneed extravagance enjoy it the most'.The Epicureans claim that a sufficient array of such kinetic pleasures can

outweigh various kinds of bodily distress that a person inevitably experiences. The quest for pleasure involves seeking not only a greater long-termbalance of pleasure over pain (as we have seen), but also seeking thepreponderance of kinetic pleasure over pain at a given time. By properlyfollowing Epicurean practice, 'the wise will be in a constant state of pleasure, since there is no time in which they do not have more pleasure thanpain'. Thus the Epicureans recognize two ways in which to dealwith an experience of pain. One is to remove the pain itself, in accordancewith the third remedy, either by satisfying or removing the desire that is itssource.

The other, employed in the fourth remedy, is to neutralize the pain, by arraying against it a greater quantity of kinetic pleasures.

Such pleasures are plentiful in life, especially a life unencumbered bythe pains of unnecessary desires.For example, even the wise person will experience feelings of hungerand thirst on a regular basis. The Epicurean is well equipped to satisfythese desires, and will do so, but he is not concerned to keep them fromarising in the first place, or to stifle them as soon as they appear. TheEpicurean pursuing static pleasure does not shrink from these feelings ofbodily discomfort or try to avoid them entirely. This does not frustrate hisultimate goal of achieving freedom from pain, because such discomfortsare typically outweighed, especially in their earlier less intense stages, byfeelings of pleasure. It is possible to ignore feelings of hunger and thirst, orto have little consciousness of them, if one is engaged in other absorbing orotherwise pleasant activities. On balance, one's experience can be pleasanteven if one is feeling some discomfort.

The pleasant life sought by the Epicureans is therefore not free frompain in the sense that would make Epicureanism a doctrine of softness andsqueamishness in the face of pain, one that advocates avoiding all kindsof discomfort. It teaches instead that many pains are endurable becausethey are outweighed by the multitude of pleasant experiences with whicha well-ordered life is replete. Still, one might object, not all unavoidablepains are endurable by this route, especially those of serious illness orinjury. Here a second Epicurean claim about pleasure is relevant.

Epicurus and his followers maintain that every bodily pain or pleasurehas a mental corollary or component. When a person experiences thepleasure of a cool drink on a hot day, there are two feelings of pleasure:the bodily sensation, and the mind's enjoyment. Without the appropriatemental attitude, the pleasure will be significantly diminished. For example,the pleasure you experience in eating a delicious food can be significantlydiminished by the expectation that it will make you violently ill the nextmorning. Similarly with the experience of pain. Having a hearty appetite(that is, being very hungry) when you anticipate having a good meal isbearable, even enjoyable, whereas experiencing the same craving for foodwithout any expectation (or worse, with doubt) that one will get anythingto eat in the near future is quite another matter – a serious discomfort. Themental attitude one takes towards the pain has a large effect on whether itis bearable, and can make even intense discomfort bearable.

According to the Epicureans, the mental aspect of pleasure and pain isso much more significant for our total experience than our bodily orsensory experience, that we can, by focusing our thoughts appropriately,achieve a state of pleasure even while experiencing the worst bodily pains.They offer two mental strategies for achieving this result.

The first strategy exploits the fact that the mental component of pleasureis not limited to the duration of its bodily counterpart. 'In the case of thebody, all we can feel is what is actually now present. With the mind, boththe past and the future can affect us'. That is,

We are cheered by the prospect of future goods, and we enjoythe memory of past ones. But only fools are troubled by recollected evils; the wise are pleased to welcome back past goods withrenewed remembrance. We have within us the capacity to burypast misfortune in a kind of permanent oblivion, no less than tomaintain sweet and pleasant memories of our successes.

The body is pleased for only so long as it perceives a presentpleasure, while the mind perceives a present pleasure just as muchas the body does, but also foresees a pleasure which is coming inthe future and does not let a past pleasure slip from its grasp. Sothe wise man will always have a continuous and interconnected[set of] pleasures, since the expectation of hoped-for pleasures islinked to the memory of pleasures already perceived.

The Epicureans teach that it is possible, simply by the disciplined use ofmemory, to marshal kinetic mental pleasures sufficient to counterbalanceeven intense bodily pain. We might call this feature of Epicurean practicea ‘discipline of gratitude’. ‘Misfortunes must be cured by a sense of gratitude (charinechein) for what has been’.

Such is the strategyEpicurus himself claims to have employed on his deathbed:I write this to you while experiencing a blessedly happy day(makarianhemeran), and at the same time the last day of my life.Urinary blockages and dyserteric discomforts afflict me which couldnot be surpassed for their intensity. But against all these thingsare ranged the joy in my soul produced by the recollection ofthe discussions we have had. Please take care of the children ofMetrodorus.

While one might be sceptical that summoning the memories of past pleasures is sufficient to outweigh excruciating physical torment,this discipline of memory and gratitude may be supplemented by an additionalmental exercise that exploits the superiority of mental over physical pain.

If in addition to a stabbing pain in the stomach one also has thoughtslike ‘this is terrible, I can’t stand another minute of it, it will never end’,the thoughts make the experience of pain much worse. The fourth remedyteaches us that such thoughts are false: ‘Pain is generally long lasting butslight, or serious but brief’. In Epicurus’own succinct expression, ‘the limit of bad things either has a short durationor causes little trouble’. Unpacked in the fourth Principal Doctrine the more elaborated version of the claim is that: the feeling of pain does not linger continuously in the flesh; rather,the sharpest is present for the shortest time, while what merelyexceeds the feeling of pleasure in the flesh lasts only a few days.And diseases which last a long time involve feelings of pleasurewhich exceed feelings of pain.

Unavoidable bodily pains are here divided into two basic types: those inwhich the feeling of pain outweighs the feelings of pleasure, and those inwhich the feelings of bodily pleasure predominate. Pains in the latter category, once recognized as such, give no grounds for mental anxiety – sinceeven at the bodily level pleasure outweighs the pains.

For pains in the latter category, even if the discipline of memoryand gratitude cannot marshal sufficient kinetic mental pleasures to tip thebalance, one can still avoid mental anxiety by focusing on the thoughtthat they are of limited duration. Epicurus teaches that pains in the mostsevere category are of extremely brief duration and that those in the second category are also relatively short. Thus, he claims, it is possible toendure even these pains with equanimity. During an episode of the mostintense pains, keeping in mind the message of the tetrapharmakon –e.g., 'this won't last long'– can eliminate the mental anxiety that willcompound the distressing physical experience. For the second category ofpains, less intense but still strong enough to make one's on-balance bodilyexperience unpleasant, one can modify this strategy to achieve the sameequanimity by keeping in mind the thought that, e.g., 'it will all be overby next Wednesday'. This is an attitude well designed to get throughan endurance event without succumbing to despair or giving up. For painsof the last category, one reminds oneself that 'it's not so bad after all:I can still. . . .' Thus even in cases where the body's pain does outweighits experience of kinetic pleasure, it will never be accompanied by mentaldistress.

While it is not in our power to avoid suffering bodily distress, evendistress of significant intensity or duration, it is in our power to control themental component that, according to the Epicureans, is much more significant for determining just how pleased or pained we are as a result. This isnot to say that the afflicted person will not cry out in pain or exhibit othersigns of physical distress. On his deathbed, Epicurus acknowledges theintensity of his physical pains. And while they insist, contrary to Plato andAristotle, that the wise person will be happy even while he is tortured onthe rack, they do not deny that he will moan and groan.

One may object that this overstretches the limits of hedonism or ofempirical credulity. Surely one of the most terrible features of torture isthat it is not guaranteed to be of brief duration.

Nonetheless, there ismuch that is attractive about the doctrine – not least its promise of autarkeia:even in the face of the worst things that can happen to us ('the limit of badthings') it is still entirely in our power to achieve happiness.

STOICISM

FROM SOCRATES TO ZENO

More than eighty years passed between the death of Socrates in 399 BC and the arrival in Athens of Zeno in 312. Athenian society had undergone enormous upheavals, both political and social. The Greek world had been reshaped by the rise of Macedonian military and political power and by Alexander the Great's conquests in the East, which opened up new regions for commercial and political expansion. This was also one of the most creative periods of philosophical development in the history of the ancient world. It encompassed the careers of Plato and Aristotle; the schools which carried on their legacy developed and matured. There was continued

Pythagorean activity. Mathematics and geometry flourished. Other philosophical movements arose in surprising numbers; some of these, like Epicurus' Garden and the Stoa itself, were to thrive and become a permanent part of the philosophical landscape, though many were ephemeral.

Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, came to Athens from Citium on Cyprus when he was in his early twenties according to one source, his appetite for philosophy had already been stimulated by reading 'Socratic books' brought back by his father, a merchant, from his voyages. Zeno himself is said to have come to Athens on a commercial voyage, but it is hard not to suspect that the real attraction was philosophy. And when he arrived the philosophical scene was rich and varied. Plato, of course, had been dead for a generation. The fourth head of his school, Polemo, had just taken over; Platonic dialogues were standard reading. Aristotle had fled Athens and died in Euboea ten years before. His associate Theophrastus was still at the head of the school founded to continue Aristotle's programme of work. Philosophers from nearby Megara were also active on the Athenian scene; one of them, Stilpo, was a sophisticated practitioner of dialectic and also had strong interests in ethics and metaphysics. Other dialecticians contributed to a heady atmosphere of argument and logical challenge: perhaps the most famous was Cronus. A particularly striking feature of Athenian intellectual life at the time was the emergence of the 'Cynics'. These were a loose group of philosophers who claimed Socratic inspiration for their distinctive interest in ethics, in the cultivation of the excellences of character as the key to human fulfilment. They combined radical social criticism with an ascetic devotion to natural simplicity and frank speech; equally Socratic was their dedication to the rational articulation of their social ideals. For the Cynics, ethical and social norms were only as good as the justification that could be given for them. They claimed to stand for 'nature', as opposed to baseless social convention; they aimed to undermine, by their speech and their example, what they regarded as the empty and hypocritical conventions of Greek city life.

This double concentration, on reason and on nature, must have appealed to Zeno. After arriving in Athens he drifted by a book shop, where book two of Xenophon's *Socratic Reminiscences* was being read aloud;Zeno enthusiastically asked where he could find men like the ones described There. A Cynic philosopher, Crates of Thebes, was passing by, and the bookseller said 'follow him'. Zeno did, and spent many years in his company. Crates, of course, had been a follower of Diogenes of Sinope. Diogenes, in turn, was supposedly an associate of Antisthenes, a close follower of Socrates, a contemporary and rival of Plato, and (according to tradition) the founder of Cynicism. The dual influence of Socrates and Cynicism shaped the central concerns of the Stoic school from its foundations. Zeno's predilection for ethical and political philosophy no doubt had its roots in his years with Crates. But Zeno was a restless philosopher, and sought out other teachers too. The MegarianStilpo left his mark on many aspects of Zeno's philosophy. Diodorus Cronus led him in the direction of serious work in logic, which remained a central interest of the school for centuries. There was even a longish period of study in the Academy.

Polemo's special expertise in ethics can only have confirmed the Socratic interests which had brought Zeno to philosophy in the first place. The impact of the Academic division of philosophy into logic, ethics, and physics was fundamental for the development of Stoicism; but the strong systematizing tendencies of the school may also owe something to the influence of Aristotle's followers, who laboured away in the Lyceum of Theophrastus. Zeno never joined that rather specialized group of scientists and philosophers, but he can hardly have ignored the influence of a lecturer like Theophrastus, who was apparently able to draw a crowd of two thousand for his public lectures.

Zeno obviously took advantage of the wealth of philosophical opportunity available to him in Athens, and when he began to give his own public lectures in the famous Painted Stoa his system showed the influence of this breadth of education and interest. This breadth is sometimes disparaged as evidence of a merely synthetic philosophy, but a mere synthesis would never have had the impact of the school which Zenofounded, a school which lasted for half a millennium and which for muchof that time was the leading philosophical movement of the day. It is more plausible to think of his lectures, and the system which developed out of them, as being the result of a rich tradition of theory and argumentation, focused by the critical intelligence of Zeno and his successors. 'Nature' as a philosophical concept had a long history in Greek culture.

The emergence of philosophy itself is closely connected with the demarcation of what is 'natural'—what happens apart from the intervention of anthropomorphic beings—as a subject of investigation. The understanding of nature as what functions without anthropomorphic intervention came into renewed prominence in the sophistic movement of the fifth century, with the contrast between nature and 'convention' *(nomos);* here the foil for nature is human society, its values, and its institutions.

In such contrasts nature usually has a positive value. To say something is natural is to claim that it is reliable in a way that nothing can be which is dependent on changeable personal decisions or social norms. Speaking in broad terms, nature is viewed with approval because it is in principle stable and consistently explicable, and these are traits regularly favoured by philosophers, ancient and modern. Hence in the fourth century BC philosophers frequently claimed as natural those features of their systems which they regarded as fundamental. For Plato the Forms and certain facts about moral and political reality are 'natural'; Aristotle finds that goal-directedness is a basic feature of the natural world ('Nature does nothing in vain'); Epicurus calls the basic entities of his physical system, atoms and void, 'natures' and grounds his hedonism on the belief that all animals naturally desire and pursue pleasure. The Cynics urged that we should follow nature, properly understood, and not mere convention; hence the famous slogan of Diogenes 'deface the currency' *(nomisma),* which plays on the etymological linkage between *nomos*and *nomisma.*

Stoicism, though, is the ancient school most solidly associated with the concept of nature. In their ethics the Stoics claimed that the key to human fulfilment lay in living a life according to nature; they devoted a great deal of intellectual energy to physics, the study of the natural world; they argued that a godlike rationality was the central feature of human nature and even identified nature with god. Nature was formally defined as 'a craftsman-like fire, proceeding methodically to creation *(genesis)*': the rational plan controlling the organization and development of the world and materially immanent in it. Zeno's decision to build his new system around the concept of nature was triggered by the influence of Cynicism, but the rich conception of nature which he built into so many parts of hisphilosophy brings together the entire tradition.

A striking feature of Stoicism was its insistence on the unity and coordination of all the traditional aspects of philosophical activity. From the beginnings until the time of Plato philosophical enquiry ranged widely over many kinds of subject matter: the physical world, the nature of human perception and understanding, the organization of society, the nature of a good life, etc. Even in Plato there is no neat division between ethics and metaphysics, between epistemology and logic. But in the late fourth century philosophers became more self-conscious about the relationships between the various subjects philosophy dealt with. Epicurus grouped what we might call epistemology, logic, and scientific method under the heading 'canonic'; and two of Plato's followers, Xenocrates and Aristotle, developed their own views on the branches of philosophical enquiry. Aristotle's division is complex and based on the belief that different subject matters had their own independent first principles of explanation. But Aristotle matters less than the Platonist Xenocrates, who first divided philosophy formally into three parts: logic, physics, and ethics. Zeno seems to have adopted this division from his teacher Polemo and it became the standard for the school. With the exception of Aristo of Chios, who rejected everything but ethics (and was later regarded as unorthodox), all Stoics accepted this division, calling the branches variously 'topics', 'species', or 'kinds'. Cleanthes subdivided further into six parts: logic into dialectic and rhetoric, ethics into ethics proper and politics, physics into physics proper and theology. Philosophy as a whole was variously described as 'the pursuit of wisdom', as 'the pursuit of correctness of reason', and as 'the knowledge of things human and divine and their causes'. But the formal division of philosophy does raise questions about the relationship between the parts and their appropriate pedagogical order. Here there was a natural and healthy difference of opinion within the school. The disagreement was expressed through a variety of similes describing the relationship of the parts to each other. Some compared philosophy to an animal: logic was the bones and sinews, ethics the flesh, and physics the soul. Or it was like an egg: logic is the shell, the white is ethics, and the yolk is physics. Alternatively, logic is the wall around an orchard, with physics being the land and trees and ethics the fruit.Various pedagogical orderings were proposed, though all Stoics seem to have agreed that since the separation of parts was not absolute the teaching would also have to be mixed to some extent. Plutarch preserves the view of Chrysippus, the third head of the school (after Cleanthes),

whose views are often treated as the standard version of early Stoicism; he preferred the order logic, ethics, physics, ending with theology.

In practice it was impossible for the school to maintain a clean separation between the parts of philosophy, however those parts wereconceived: those Stoics who championed the inseparability of one part from another, both in substance and in teaching, were proven right.

According to the Stoics logic is the wall around the garden; physics is the soil and the trees; ethics is the fruit growing on those trees. Ethics is the part of philosophy which justifies its claim to bea craft concerned with how to live. In ancient thought, a craft is characterized by at least three features: it will be based on a body of knowledge; it will consist in a stable disposition of thecraftsman; and it will have a function and goal. Ethics is based fundamentally on a knowledge of the nature of the cosmos and man's place in it and, more particularly, of the value of things. The disposition of the agent is his or her character, ideally virtue. And the goal of the art of livingis 'happiness', *eudaimonia.*

Most ancient ethical theories work from the assumption, best articulated by Aristotle that everyone agrees that *eudaimonia*is the goal of life, the major dispute being about what happiness consists in. Some might say that it consists in a life of physical pleasures, others in a life of political power or social prominence; others might think that complete happiness lies in a life characterized by an abundance of intellectual endeavour and achievement, or in a life of selfless devotion to the welfare of others. In each case, the conception of happinessadopted would affect one's whole life, serving as a reference point for actions and decisions.

Zeno's characterization of this goal of life was simple. 'Zeno first, in his book *On the nature of man,* said that the goal was to live in agreement with nature, which is to live according to virtue'. Another source gives us a more nuanced picture of development and clarification in theschool:

Zeno defined the goal thus: to live in agreement, i.e., to live according to one harmonious *logos,* since those who live inconsistently are unhappy. His followers refined the definition and proposed the following: to live in accordance with nature, supposing that Zeno'sformulation was a deficient predicate.

Our source goes on to credit Cleanthes with the refinement and to report at length on the different formulations of the goal given by later Stoics from Chrysippus ('to live in accordance with experience of what happens by nature') to Antipater. The significance of the differing formulations lies partially in Stoics' attempts to defend their view against Academic criticism.
The main point throughout the school's development is clear, though. The goal, the basic reference point for human life, is nature.And nature clearly guides us to virtue as the exclusivesource of the happiness which constitutes the fulfilment of human life.

Nature guides human beings to virtue by processes immanent in us; as Cleanthes said, every human has a natural inclination to virtue, and the very conception of good is in some way natural to us. As soon as we are born (and the Stoics held that we are born in an uncorrupted state) it becomes apparent that we (like all other animals) are committed to the preservation and enhancement of our own selves. This basic commitment is a feature of nature as such, and it is even shared with plants (whose distinctive level of organization is, as we have seen, described as 'nature'). A summary account attempts to show how this fundamental attachment to oneself and one's own nature is related to the claim that virtue is natural to us.

They say that an animal's first impulse is to preserve itself, because nature made it committed to itself from the beginning, as Chrysippus says in book one of *On Goals,* stating that for every animal its first commitment is to its own constitution and the reflective awareness of this. For it is not reasonable that nature would make an animal alienated from itself, nor having made the animal, to make it neither committed to nor alienated from itself. Therefore, the remaining possibility is to say that having constituted the animal she made it committed to itself. For in this way it repels injurious influences and pursues that which is proper to it. The Stoics claim that what some people say is false, viz. that the first impulse of animals is to pleasure.For they say that pleasure is, if anything, a by-product which supervenes when nature itself, on its own, seeks out and acquires what is suitable to the animal's constitution. It is like the condition of thriving animals and plants in top condition. And nature, they say, did not operate differently in the cases of plants and of animals; for it directs the life of plants too, though without impulse and sense-perception, and even in us some processes are plant-like.

When, in the case of animals, impulse is added (which they use in the pursuit of things to which they have an affinity), then for them what is natural is governed by what is according to impulse. When reason has been given to rational animals as a more perfect governor, then for them the life according to reason properly becomes what is natural for them. For reason supervenes on impulse as a craftsman.

The Stoic commitment to nature emerges here very clearly. It is not just human nature, for (like the Cynics and Epicureans) the Stoics use animals to illustrate the patterns of desire and satisfaction which define the inevitable and undeniable foundation of human excellence and happiness, and in doing so they reveal both the universal immanence and the overall teleology which are key features of their physics. A greater challenge for the Stoics, though, lies in explaining how human beings progress from their initial and apparently animal-like state of concern with self-preservation to a mature and rationally articulated commitment to a rational life as such.

To judge from a later Stoic account, the answer must be that as humans mature our constitution develops, so that our commitment to our constitution develops along with it. When our nature

becomes fully rational at the age of fourteen, our commitment developsinto a desire to preserve and enhance that rationality. Hence the Socratic commitment to do whatever is dictated by the best argument is grounded by the Stoics in a well developed theory of human character development. To consider the extreme case: should it turn out that the argument dictates that our own life be sacrificed in the name of rationality, then the commitment to our rational nature will override our commitment to self-preservation. Hence Socrates calmly allowed himself to be executed and the Stoics consistently maintained that a well-thought-out suicide was a reasonable option in extreme circumstances.

It follows for the Stoics that one of the principal jobs of ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is the working out of what reason dictates. The principal reference point for doing so was the Socratic tradition in ethics, especially the version of it that we know through Plato's 'Socratic' dialogues. Perhaps the first Socratic passage to reflect on is *Meno*77–8, which appears to establish that the good (in the sense of what one believes to be beneficial to oneself) motivates every agent. 'Benefit' becomes crucial in establishing the difference between what is good, what is bad, and what is indifferent (i.e., neither good nor bad), both for Socrates. The apparent good (as Aristotle termed it) always motivates a rational agent, but obviously if one is wrong about what is beneficial then one will also act incorrectly. On Socratic and Stoic principles, a genuine good is what invariably gives the agent true and lasting benefit. However, few of the goods as conventionally understood provide this: wealth, social standing, even bodily health can all lead to unpleasant results in some circumstances. This was common ground among the Stoics, as even the debate between Aristo of Chios and more conventional Stoics shows.In fact, it is argued, there really is nothing except virtue (and, of course, things which participate in virtue) which can be relied on to produce real benefit in every circumstance. Other things are all indifferent to the achievement of happiness, the goal of life.

But such things are not for that reason absolutely indifferent, as are things like the exact number of hairs on one's head. For some things obviously make a positive contribution to the kind of life for which we humans have been designed by nature, while others actively hinder such a life. The former, then, are termed 'preferred' and the latter 'dispreferred' (a typical instance of Stoic neologism): health and prosperity and reputation are preferred because they make a real contribution to a normal human life, while disease and poverty and social disapproval are the opposite. Nevertheless, the Socratic argument which lies at the heart of Stoic ethics urged that such things, considered on their own, could not make a person happy, that all that mattered is how one uses them. Even disease and death can be handled by a virtuous person in such a way that good will come of it. The key, of course, is virtue. With it, happiness is assured, and without it one is bound to fall short.

The Stoics also followed Socrates in accepting some version of the Socratic thesis of the unity of the virtues, best known from the *Protagoras.* Yet they also adopted the Platonic schematization of the virtues into a canonical set of four distinct virtues (prudence or practical intelligence, courage, justice, temperance or self-controlwith the others organized as subtypes of these. There was debate within the school over the relationship between these individual virtues and their foundation (which is a form of practical and critical intelligence, properly oriented towards the fulfilment of human nature as part of a larger and rational cosmos). Aristo is identified with the view that there really is in the human soul only one condition which constitutes virtue, though it is called by different names as it is applied in different circumstances and in the face of different challenges and various human weaknesses. When applied to threatening situations, it is courage, but if we are tempted by pleasures, we call it self-control, and so forth. Chrysippus, on the other hand, held that each virtuerepresented a genuinely distinct feature of the state of our souls, but thatthese distinct virtues are inseparable in fact so that the presence in the soulof one entails the presence of all. As far as we can tell, Zeno's view seemsto have been somewhere between these two extremes. But all Stoics seem atleast to have held that the virtues are inseparable and that they are basedon *knowledge* of what is good, what is bad, and what is indifferent, aknowledge which is a fully habituated state of the agent's soul.Virtue, then, depends in large measure on knowing the value of things.

The awareness that things like health are preferable but not good (in the relevant technical sense—for Chrysippus sensibly allowed the normal and looser meaning of 'good' as well) will affect the way an agent acts for the Stoics (again, starting with Zeno) distinguished clearly between actions which are appropriate and reasonable for humans to do and those which are also virtuous. Appropriate actions *(kathêkonta)* are defined as those which 'when done admit of a reasonable justification' (and the reasonableness can be relativized to the nature of the agent). Thus animals, too, can carry out appropriate 'actions'. In contrast, actions which are appropriate and in addition flow from the virtuous disposition of an agent are described as 'right actions' *(katorthômata).* The distinction between appropriate and right actions is crucial for an understanding of how Stoic theories about the value of things and the goal of life were meant to be put into practice.

Appropriate actions are described at two levels of generality. Sometimes our sources describe general types of action as being appropriate for humans, such as taking care of one's health, earning a living, attending to one's family, engaging in political activity; the opposites of such actions are stigmatized as inappropriate; other types of action are classed as neither appropriate nor inappropriate, such as holding a pen or picking up a stick. Yet in concrete circumstances any of these actions can in fact become the appropriate thing to do. Stoic interest naturally centred on actions which in general are inappropriate or irrational (such as maiming oneself) but on some occasion, as a result of peculiar circumstances, turn out to be the reasonable thing to do; they are labelled 'appropriate in the circumstances'.

The justification which lies behind the general prescriptions for appropriate actions is often easy to intuit; what is less clear from our sources (except late ones, like Cicero's *De Officii*sand Seneca's *De Beneficiis*) is the kind of moral reasoning which the Stoics recommended as a way of determining the best and most justifiable action in a given circumstance. Yet it is clear that the Stoics did regard this as a matter of reasoning, for one standard characterization of appropriate actions is 'what reason constrains us to do' —interestingly, this is exactly the phrase used by Plato's Socrates to describe his own commitment to reasoning out the best thing to do in a given circumstance. Reasoning about what to do and what not to do is extraordinarilydifficult for humans, in view of our relative ignorance and fallibility,especially about the future. (Overcoming this, to the best of our abilities, isone of the main applications of logic and physics.) Another later Stoic,Epictetus (who worked in the late first century AD), preserves Chrysippus'reflections on the problem:as long as it is unclear to me what comes next, I always cling to whatis naturally more suited for getting what accords with nature; for godhimself made me prone to choose things. But if I really did know thatit is now fated for me to be sick, then I would even pursue that.

Even illness, then, and death can be the objects of rational choice, *if* one has a clear enough view about the plan worked out for oneself by the providential order of the world; but normally one does not, so that normal prudence guides the vast majority of our actions. Only when it is clear that fate is drawing us on to some definite outcome do we abandon that endeavour and follow fate, knowing of course that it is all for the best in the larger cosmic pattern.

But appropriate actions are only the foundation of morality. No action, however reasonable and well justified, is *right* unless it is done from a virtuous disposition. This, of course, is the principal difference between appropriate and right actions, and in considering right actions it is crucial to recall that they are defined as a subset of appropriate actions: they are 'perfect' or 'complete' appropriate actions. Even the genuinely virtuous person, who is wise and perhaps as rare as the mythical phoenix, needs to figure out the appropriate thing to do, and there is no reason to believe that this process is any different for the person of virtue than it is for the ordinary person making moral progress.It is difficult to determine in detail how the possession of virtue changes each action. Our sources seem to emphasize the completeness of a right action (it covers all the 'aspects') and the firmness of the moral disposition which produces the action. The nature of the motivation (knowing that what is done is done for its own sake) may also have been important. The crucial points, though, are that only a completely virtuous person can perform a right action, and that only the wise man has virtue. The rest of mankind are, strictly speaking, fools and full of vice.

Much of Stoic ethical writing, then, focused on fools—Panaetius, in the second century BC, made a point of emphasizing this aspect of Stoic ethics, but he was certainly not alone in this. In all periods of the school's long history Stoics wrote about appropriate actions at least as much as

they did about virtue and the sage. Their appeal lay not just in the clear and uncompromising conception of virtue and right action; it lay also in the emphasis they placed on moral progress and the writings they devoted to promoting it. Perhaps the most important aspect of their campaign to promote virtue is their focus on the passions. For here, though it is clear that their theory of the passions (such as pleasure, pain, fear, and desire) was based on their rigorous conception of the good and virtue, the recommendations they made for fighting against such passions were calculated to work even for those who had not and would not attainwisdom and complete virtue.

The Stoics' theory of passions is based on their analysis of the human soul; the key position is one on which they disagreed with both Plato and Aristotle, though they no doubt thought they were in the spirit of Socratic intellectualism: they rejected any fundamental difference between cognitive and affective parts or functions of the soul, maintaining that every function of the soul has both a cognitive and an affective aspect and that the cognitive aspect is the causally important one. Within this framework, they defined a passion as an irrational and excessive movement in the soul.It is treated as a cognitively determined event in the soul—either identical with or the inescapable result of an assent to a seriously incorrect proposition about the value of things. It is when one judges that (for example) the death of one's sister is bad (and not just dispreferred) or that wealth is good (and not just preferred) that one falls into the kind ofoverreaction which constitutes a passion—in these cases grief and desire.

Ideally all such mistakes would be avoided; that would lead to freedom from passion or *apatheia*—a mental condition far from that connoted by our word 'apathy'. The Stoic view seems to be that confusion about the kind of value things have lies at the heart of our tendency to unhealthy emotional reactions. These reactions are wrong not because they engender subjectively unpleasant feelings (in fact, some of them are quite enjoyable—pleasure is an irrational 'uplift' in the soul), but because they invariably produce inconsistency and vacillation, cloud our judgement, over-commit us to certain short-term courses of action and feeling, and block our normal rational concern with longer-term planning. Passions are also wrong because they routinely put us into conflict with the naturally and providentially ordained course of events—this is one of the senses of irrationality captured in the definition—and deprive us of the adaptability which any rational agent must have to survive and prosper in a determinedbut unpredictable world.

The ideal state of mind, then, is not the absolutely unfeeling condition suggested by our term 'stoical', but an affective life characterized by stable and healthy emotional reactions to events. But how does one get to this condition? What is the cure for passions? Obviously, to get straight about values, to learn the difference between what is really good or bad and what is merely preferred or dispreferred. For Stoics, who did not think that there was a distinct emotive part of

the soul, this ought, in principle, to be the proper cure, and this was apparently promoted by Cleanthes as the onlycure for such mental confusion. But although this accords well with the school's intellectualist philosophy of mind, its impracticality will be immediately obvious to anyone actually counselling a friend in the grip of a strong passion. The practicality of the school's approach to ethics is confirmed by Chrysippus' improvement on this: he thought that the starting point would have to be to convince the patient (for the Stoics made extensive use of the medical metaphor in discussing passions) that it was not reasonable or right to overreact to one's feelings, and to leave until later the fundamental issue of the nature of good, bad, and indifferent.

To summarize the guiding ideas of Stoicism throughout its history are nature and reason. Though much changed in the school over its history (Stoicism avoided the static character of Epicureanism as well as the extraordinary variability seen in the Platonic tradition), the centrality of these notions never varied.

Nature, whether on a large or a small scale, is rational and reasonable, and so at heart is every human being. Hence, they thought, we fit into nature not as merely physical objects, but as rational animals. Perhaps they saw themselves as having found the ideal middle ground between two tempting positions: the notion that man's rationality puts him fundamentally at odds with the physical world; and the idea, represented by other materialists in the ancient world, that we are our physical selves and nothing more. The bold claim made by the Stoics was that the natural and the rational are in the final analysis identical, and that human beings can only find themselves by looking to nature, to the orderly, purposive, and explicable whole of which they are privileged parts.

3.4- Utilitarianism

3.4.1- Bentham's Utilitarianism

In most systems of morality, happiness is a concept of great importance. A long series of moral philosophers, tracing their ancestry back to Plato and Aristotle, had treated happiness as the supreme good, and some ethicists went so far as to affirm that human beings seek happiness in all their choices.In challenging the primacy of happiness, Kant was unusual.

In his Groundworkhe proclaimed that duty, not happiness, was the supreme ethical motive. At first sight, therefore, when Bentham declared that every action should be evaluated in accordance with the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish happiness, he was just reaffirming a longstanding consensus. But on closer inspection Bentham's greatest happiness principle is very different from traditional eudaimonism.

In the first place, Bentham identifies happiness with pleasure: it is pleasure that is the supreme spring of action. TheIntroduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislationfamously begins:

"*Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand, the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it."* (P1. 1)

To maximize happiness, therefore, for Bentham, is the same thing as to maximize pleasure. Utilitarians could cite Plato as a forebear, since in his Protagoras, he had offered for discussion the thesis that virtue consists in the correct choice of pleasure and pain. Aristotle, on the other hand, made a distinction between happiness and pleasure, and in particular refused to identify happiness with the pleasures of the senses. Bentham by contrast not only treated happiness as equivalent to pleasure, but regarded pleasure itself as simply a sensation. '*In this matter we want no refinement, no metaphysics. It is not necessary to consult Plato, nor Aristotle. Pain and pleasure are what everybody feels to be such.'*

Bentham was careful to point out that pleasure was a sensation that could be caused not only by eating and drinking and sex, but also by a multitude of other things, as varied as the acquisition of wealth, kindness to animals, or belief in the favour of a Supreme Being. So critics who regarded Bentham's hedonism as a call to sensuality were quite mistaken.

However, whereas for a thinker like Aristotle pleasure was to be identified with the activity enjoyed, for Bentham the relation between an activity and its pleasure was one of cause and effect. Whereas for Aristotle the value of a pleasure was the same as the value of the activity enjoyed, for Bentham the value of each and every pleasure was the same, no matter how it was caused. 'Quantity of pleasure being equal', he wrote, 'push-pin is as good as poetry.' What went for pleasure went for pain, too: the quantity of pain,and not its cause, is the measure of its disvalue.

It is the quantification of pleasure and pain, therefore, that is of prime importance for a utilitarian: in deciding on an action or a policy we need to estimate the amount of pleasure and the amount of pain likely to ensue. Bentham was aware that such quantification was no trivial task, and he offered recipes for the measurement of pleasures and pains. Pleasure Acounts more than pleasure B if it is more intense, or if it lasts longer, or if it is more certain, or if it is more immediate. In the '*felicific calculus'* these different factors must be taken into account and weighed against each other. In judging pleasure-producing actions we must also consider fecundity and purity: a pleasurable action is fecund if it is likely to produce a subsequent series of pleasures, and it is pure if it is unlikely to produce a subsequent series of pains. All these factors are to be taken into account when we are operating the calculus with respect to our own

affairs; if we are considering public policy, we must further consider another factor, which Bentham calls ‘extension’—that is, how widely the pains and pleasures will be spread across the population.

Bentham offered a mnemonic rhyme to aid in operating the calculus: Intense, long, certain, speedy, fruitful, pure—

Such marks in pleasures and in pains endure.

Such pleasures seek if private be thy end;

If it be public, wide let them extend.

Such pains avoid, whichever be thy view

If pains must come, let them extend to few.

In using the felicific calculus for purposes of determining public policy,extension is the crucial factor. ‘The greatest happiness of the greatestnumber’ is an impressive slogan; but when probed it turns out to beriddled with ambiguity.

The first question to be raised is ‘greatest number ofwhat?’ Should we add‘voters’ or ‘citizens’ or ‘males’ or ‘human beings’ or ‘sentient beings’? Itmakes a huge difference which answer we give. Throughout the twocenturies of utilitarianism’s history most of its devotees would probablygive the answer ‘human beings’, and this is most likely the answer thatBentham would have given. He did not advocate women’s suffrage, butonly because he thought that to do so would provoke outrage; in principlehe thought that on the basis of the greatest happiness principle ‘the claimof [the female] sex is, if not still better, at least altogether as good as that of the other’.

In recent years many utilitarians have extended the happiness principlebeyond humankind to other sentient beings, claiming that animals haveequal claims with human beings. Though a great lover of animals (especially cats) Bentham himself did not go as far as this, and he would haverejected the idea that animals have rights, because he did not believe innatural rights of any kind. But by making the supreme moral criterion amatter of sensation he made it appropriate to consider animals as belonging to the same moral community as ourselves since animals as well ashumans feel pleasure and pain. This, in the long term, proved to be one ofthe most significant consequences of Bentham’s break with the classicaland Christian moral tradition, which placed supreme moral value inactivities not of the sense but of the reason, and regarded non-rationalanimals as standing outside the moral community.

A second question about the principle of utility is this: should individuals, or politicians, in following the greatest happiness principle attempt tocontrol the number of candidates for happiness (however these are defined)? Does the extension of happiness to a greater number

mean that weshould try to bring more people (or animals) into existence? What answerwe give to this is linked to a third, even more difficult, question: when weare measuring the happiness of a population, do we consider only totalhappiness, or should we also consider average happiness? Should we takeaccount of the distribution of happiness as well as of its quantity? If so, thenwe have to strike a difficult balance between quantity of happiness andquantity of people.

This issue is a problem rather for political philosophy than for moral philosophy. But even if we restrict our consideration to matters of individual morality, there remains a problem raised by the initial passage of the Introduction above. The hedonism there proclaimed is twofold: there is a psychological hedonism (pleasure determines all our actions) and an ethical hedonism (pleasure is the standard of right and wrong). But the pleasure cited in psychological hedonism is the pleasure of the individual person; the pleasure invoked in ethical hedonism is the pleasure (however quantified) of the total moral community. If I am, in fact, predetermined in every action to aim at maximizing my own pleasure, what point is there intelling me that I am obliged to maximize the common good? This was aproblem that was to exercise some of Bentham's successors in the utilitarian tradition.

Bentham commended utilitarianism by contrasting it with other ethicalsystems. The second chapter of theIntroductionis entitled 'Of Principles Adverseto that of Utility'. He lists two such principles, the first being the principle ofasceticism, and the second the principle of sympathy and antipathy. Theprinciple of asceticism is the mirror image of the principle of utility, approvingof actions to the extent that they tend to diminish the quantity of happiness.

A man who accepts the principle of sympathy and antipathy, on the otherhand, judges actions as good or bad to the extent that they accord or not withhis own feelings.

Bentham's principle of asceticism set up a straw man. Religious traditions have indeed set a high value on self-denial and mortification ofthe flesh; but even among religious teachers it is rare to find one whomakes the infliction of suffering upon oneself the overarching principle of every action. No one, religious or secular, had ever proposed a policy ofpursuing the greatest misery of the greatest number. Bentham himselfadmits, 'The principle of asceticism never was, nor ever can be, consistentlypursued by any living creature'.

The principle of sympathy and antipathy is a catch-all that includesmoral systems of very different kinds. Sympathy and antipathy, Benthamsays, may be given various fancy names: moral sense, common sense,understanding, rule of right, fitness of things, law of nature, right reason,and so on. Moral systems that present themselves under such banners,Bentham believes, are all simply placing a grandiose screen in front of anappeal to individual subjective feeling. 'They consist all of them in so manycontrivances for avoiding the obligation of appealing to any externalstandard, and for prevailing upon the reader to accept of the author'ssentiment or opinion as a reason for itself '. We cannot appeal tothe will of God to settle whether something is right; we have to know firstwhether it is right in order to decide whether it is conformable to

God'swill. 'What is called the pleasure of God is, and must necessarily be(revelation apart) neither more nor less than the good pleasure of theperson, whoever he be, who is pronouncing what he believes, or pretends,to be God's pleasure'.

Bentham does not bring out what is the really significant differencebetween utilitarianism and other moral systems. We may divide moralphilosophers into absolutists and consequentialists. Absolutists believe thatthere are some kinds of action that are intrinsically wrong, and shouldnever be done, irrespective of any consideration of the consequences.

Consequentialists believe that the morality of actions should be judgedby their consequences, and that there is no category of act that may not, inspecial circumstances, be justified by its consequences. Prior to Benthammost philosophers were absolutists, because they believed in a natural law,or natural rights. If there are natural rights and a natural law, then somekinds of action, actions that violate those rights or conflict with that law,are wrong, no matter what the consequences.

Bentham rejected the notion of natural law, on the grounds that no twopeople could agree what it was. He was scornful of natural rights, believing one such is St John of the Cross, but even he sees this as a means to eventual superabundant happiness;that real rights could only be conferred by positive law; and his greatestscorn was directed to the idea that natural rights could not be overridden.

'Natural rights is simple nonsense: natural and imprescriptible rights,rhetorical nonsense—nonsense upon stilts'. If there is no naturallaw and no natural rights, then no class of actions can be ruled out inadvance of the consideration of the consequences of such an action in aparticular case.

This difference between Bentham and previous moralists is highly significant, as can be easily illustrated. Aristotle, Aquinas, and almost all Christianmoralists believed that adultery was always wrong. Not so for Bentham: theconsequences foreseen by a particular adulterer must be taken into account before making a moral judgment. A believer in natural law, told that someHerod or Nero has killed 5,000 citizens guilty of no crime, will say withoutfurther ado, 'That was a wicked act'. A thoroughgoing consequentialist,before making such a judgement, must ask further questions. What were theconsequences of the massacre? What did the monarch foresee? What wouldhave happened if he had allowed the 5,000 to live?

3.4.2- Modifications of Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill)

John Stuart Mill was, like Bentham, a consequentialist. But in other wayshe toned down aspects of Bentham's teaching that had been found mostoffensive. In his treatiseUtilitarianism, written in his late fifties, he acknowledges that many people have thought that the idea that life has no higherend than pleasure was a doctrine worthy only of swine. He replies that it isfoolish to deny that humans have faculties that are higher than the onesthey share with animals. This allows us to

make distinctions betweendifferent pleasures not only in quantity but also in quality. ‘It is quitecompatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact that somekindsof pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others’.

How then do we grade the different kinds of pleasure? ‘Of two pleasures’,Mill tells us, ‘if there be one to which all or almost all who have experienceof both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moralobligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure.’ Armed withthis distinction a utilitarian can put a distance between himself and theswine. Few humans would wish to be changed into a lower animal even ifpromised a cornucopia of bestial pleasures. ‘*It is better to be a human beingdissatisfied than a pig satisfied.’* Again, no intelligent, educated personwould wish, at any price, to become a foolish ignoramus. It is *‘better tobe Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied’*.

Happiness, according to Mill, involves not just contentment, but also asense of dignity; any amount of the lower pleasures, without this, wouldnot amount to happiness. Accordingly, the greatest happiness principleneeds to be restated:

The ultimate end, with reference to and for the sake of which all other things aredesirable (whether we are considering our own good or that of other people), is anexistence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments,both in point of quantity and quality; the test of quality, and the rule for measuringit against quantity, being the preference felt by those who in their opportunities ofexperience, to which must be added their habits of self-consciousness and self-observation, are best furnished with the means of comparison.

Suppose, then, that a critic grants to Mill that utilitarianism need not beswinish. Still, he may insist, it does not appeal to the best in human nature.

Virtue is more important than happiness, and acts of renunciation and self-sacrifice are the most splendid of human deeds. Mill agrees that it is nobleto be capable of resigning one’s own happiness for the sake of others—butwould the hero or martyr’s sacrifice be made if he did not believe that itwould increase the amount of happiness in the world? A person who denieshimself the enjoyment of life for any other purpose ‘is no more deservingof admiration than the ascetic mounted on his pillar’.

Objections to utilitarianism come in two different forms. As a moralcode, it may be thought to be too strict, or it may be thought to be too lax.Those who complain that it is too strict say that to insist that in everysingle action one should take account not just of one’s own but ofuniversal happiness is to demand a degree of altruism beyond the rangeof all but saints. Indeed, even to work out what is the most felicific of thechoices available at any given moment calls for superhuman powers ofcalculation. Those who regard utilitarianism as too lax say that its abolitionof absolute prohibitions on kinds of action opens a door for moral agents topersuade themselves whenever they feel like it that they are in the specialcircumstances that would justify

an otherwise outrageous act. They couldquote words that Mill himself wrote to Harriet Taylor soon after they met:

Where there exists a genuine and strong desire to do that which is most for thehappiness of all, general rules are merely aids to prudence, in the choice of means;not peremptory obligations. Let but the desires be right, and the 'imagination loftyand refined'; & provided there be disdain of all false seeming, 'to the pure all thingsare pure'.

InUtilitarianismMill offers a defence on both fronts. Against the allegation ofexcessive rigour, he urges us to distinguish between a moral standard and amotive of action: utilitarianism, while offering universal happiness as theultimate moral standard, does not require it to be the aim of every action.

Moreover, there is no need to run through a felicific calculus in every case:it is absurd to talk 'as if, at the moment when some man feels tempted tomeddle with the property or life of another, he had to begin consideringfor the first time whether murder and theft are injurious to humanhappiness'. To those who allege laxity, he responds with atuquoque:all moral systems have to make room for conflicting obligations, and utilityis not the only creed 'which is able to furnish us with excuses for evil doing,and means of cheating our own conscience'.

The difficulty about utilitarianism that Mill himself takes most seriouslyis the allegation that it is a recipe for preferring expedience to justice. Millresponds that the dictates of justice do indeed form part of the field ofgeneral expediency, but that nonetheless there is a difference between whatis expedient, what is moral, and what is just. If something is expedient (inthe sense of conducing to the general happiness) then, on utilitariangrounds, it should be done, but there need not be any question of dutyinvolved. If something is not just expedient but also moral, then a dutyarises; and it is part of the notion of a duty that a person may be rightlycompelled to fulfil it. Not all duties, however, create correlative rights inother persons, and it is this extra element that makes the differencebetween morality in general and justice in particular: 'Justice impliessomething which is not only right to do, and wrong not to do, butwhich some individual person can claim from us as his moral right'. It is important, for Mill, to mark the connection between justiceandmoralrights: because he emphasizes that there can be legal rights thatare unjust, and just claims that conflict with law.

Mill explains how various notions connected with justice—desert,impartiality, equality—are to be reconciled with the utilitarian principleof expediency. With regard to quality, he cites a maxim of Bentham's,'everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one'—each person'shappiness is counted for exactly as much as another's. But he does notreally address the problem inherent in the greatest happiness principle,that it leaves room for the misery of an individual to be discounted in orderto increase the overall total of happiness in the community.

Indeed, in UtilitarianismMill has little to say about distributive justiceother than to note that those forms on offer vary from system to system:Some Communists consider it unjust that the

produce of the labour of thecommunity should be shared on any other principle than that of exact equality;others think it just that those should receive most whose wants are greatest; whileothers hold that those who work harder, or who produce more, or whose servicesare more valuable to the community, may justly claim a larger quota in thedivision of the produce. And the sense of natural justice may be plausibly appealedto in behalf of every one of these opinions.

CHAPTER FOUR- DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

Deontological or nonconsequentialist ethics involves the so called duty-based theories. These theories of ethics determine the goodness or otherwise of an action not on the basis of their consequences rather based on their conformity to certain rules or duties. One such theory is divine command theory.

4.1- Divine Command Theory

It is one of the deontologcal theories and it claims that we should always do the will of God. In other words, whatever the situation, if we do what God wills, then we do the right thing; on the contrary if we fail to do what God wills we do wrong regardless of the consequences. The sole justification for obeying God's law is that he wills it, not because it promotes our good. Under this section we shall look at the moral philosophies of St. Augustine and St. Aquinas.

ST. AUGUSTINE

St. Augustine's ethic has this in common with what one might call the typical Greek ethic, that it is eudaemonistic in character, that it proposes an end for human conduct, namely happiness; but this happiness is to be found only in God. 'The Epicurean who places man's supreme good in the body, places his hope in himself,' but 'the rational creature . . . has been so made that it cannot itself be the good by which it is made happy': the human being is mutable and insufficient to itself, it can find its happiness only in the possession of what is more than itself, in the possession of an immutable object. Not even virtue itself can be the end: 'it is not the virtue of thy soul that maketh thee happy, but He who hath given thee the virtue, who hath inspired thee to will, and hath given thee the power to do.' It is not the ideal of the Epicurean that can bring happiness to man, nor even that of the Stoic, but God Himself: 'the striving after God is, therefore, the desire of beatitude, the attainment of God is beatitude itself.' That the human being strives after beatitude or happiness, and that beatitude means the attainment of an object, Augustine knew well from his own experience, even if he found confirmation of this fact in philosophy; that this object is God, he learnt also from his personal experience, even if he had been helped to realise the fact by the philosophy of Plotinus. But when he said that happiness is to be found in the attainment and possession of the eternal and immutable Object, God, he was thinking, not of a purely philosophic and- theoretic contemplation of God, but of a loving union with and possession of God, and indeed of the supernatural union with God held up to the Christian as the term of his grace-aided endeavour: one cannot well separate out in Augustine's thought a natural and a supernatural ethic, since he deals with man in the concrete, and man in the concrete has a

supernatural vocation: he regarded the neo-Platonists as discerning something of that which was revealed by Christ, neo-Platonism as an inadequate and partial realisation of the truth.

The ethic of Augustine is, then, primarily an ethic of love: it is by the will that man reaches out towards God and finally takes possession of and enjoys Him. 'When therefore the will, which is the intermediate good, cleaves to the immutable good . . . , man finds therein the blessed life';1 'for if God is man's supreme good ... it clearly follows, since to seek the supreme good is to live well, that to live well is nothing else but to love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind.' Indeed, after quoting the words of Christ, as recorded by St. Matthew, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind' and 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', Augustine asserts that 'Natural philosophy is here, since all the causes of all natural things are in God the Creator', and that, 'Ethics are here, since a good and honest life is not formed otherwise than by loving as they should be loved those things which we ought to love, namely, God and our neighbour.' Augustine's ethic thus centres round the dynamism of the will, which is a dynamism of love, though the attainment of beatitude, 'participation in the immutable good', is not possible for man unless he be aided by grace, unless he receives 'the gratuitous mercy of the Creator'.

The will, however, is free, and the free will is subject to moral obligation. The Greek philosophers had a conception of happiness as the end of conduct, and one cannot say that they had no idea of obligation; but owing to his clearer notion of God and of divine creation Augustine was able to give to moral obligation a firmer metaphysical basis than the Greeks had been able to give it.

The necessary basis of obligation is freedom. The will is free to turn away from the immutable Good and to attach itself to mutable goods, taking as its object either the goods of the soul, without reference to God, or the goods of the body. The will necessarily seeks happiness, satisfaction, and de facto this happiness can be found only in God, the immutable Good, but man has not the vision of God in this life, he can turn his attention to and cling to mutable goods in place of God, and 'this turning away and this turning to are not forced but voluntary actions'.

The human will is, then, free to turn to God or away from God, but at the same time the human mind must recognise the truth, not only that what it seeks, happiness, can be found only in the possession of the immutable Good, God, but also that the direction of the will to that good is implanted by God and willed by God, who is the Creator. By turning away from God the will runs counter to the divine law, which is expressed in human nature, made by God for Himself. All men are conscious to some extent of moral standards and laws: 'even the ungodly . . . rightly blame and rightly praise many things in the conduct of men.' How are they enabled to do so, save by seeing the rules according to which men ought to live, even if they do not personally obey these laws in their own conduct? Where do they see these rules? Not in their own minds, since their minds are mutable, whereas the 'rules of justice' are immutable; not in their characters, since they are ex hypothesi unjust. They see the moral rules, says Augustine, using his customary, if

obscure, manner of speaking, 'in the book of that light which is called Truth'. The eternal laws of morality are impressed in the heart of man, 'as the impression of a ring passes into the wax, yet does not leave the ring'. There are indeed some men who are more or less blind to the law, but even they are 'sometimes touched by the splendour of the omnipresent truth'. Thus, just as the human mind perceives eternal theoretic truths in the light of God, so it perceives, in the same light, practical truths or principles which should direct the free will. Man is by his nature, his nature considered in the concrete, set towards God; but he can fulfill the dynamism of that nature only by observing the moral laws which reflect the eternal law of God, and which are not arbitrary rules but follow from the Nature of God and the relationship of man to God. The laws are not arbitrary caprices of God, but their observance is willed by God, for He would not have created man without willing that man should be what He meant him to be. The will is free, but it is at the same time subject to moral obligations, and to love God is a duty.

The relationship of man to God, however, is the relationship of a finite creature to the infinite Being, and the result is that the gulf cannot be bridged without the divine aid, without grace: grace is necessary even to begin to will to love God. 'When man tries to live justly by his own strength without the help of the liberating grace of God, he is then conquered by sins; but in free will he has it in his power to believe in the Liberator and to receive grace.' 'The law was therefore given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.' 'Our will is by the law shown to be weak, that grace may heal its infirmity.'3 'The law of teaching and commanding that which cannot be fulfilled without grace demonstrates to man his weakness, in order that the weakness thus proved may resort to the Saviour, by whose healing the will may be able to do what in its feebleness it found impossible.'

It would be out of place here to enter on the question of Augustine's doctrine of grace and its relation to the free will, which is in any case a difficult question; but it is necessary to grasp the fact that when Augustine makes the love of God the essence of the moral law, he is referring to that union of the will with God which requires the elevation effected by grace. This is only natural, once given the fact that he is considering and treating man in the concrete, man endowed with a supernatural vocation, and it means that he supplements and completes the wisdom of philosophy with the wisdom of the Scriptures. One can, for purposes of schematism, try to separate Augustine the philosopher and Augustine the theologian; but in his own eyes the true philosopher is a man who surveys reality in the concrete, as it is, and it cannot be seen as it is without taking into account the economy of redemption and of grace.

If moral perfection consists in loving God, in directing the will to God and bringing all other powers, e.g. the senses, into harmony with this direction, evil will consist in turning the will away from God. But what is evil in itself, moral evil? Is it something positive? It cannot, first of all, be something positive in the sense of something created by God: the cause of moral evil is not the Creator but the created will. The cause of good things is the divine goodness, whereas the cause of evil is the created will which turns away from the immutable Good: evil is a turningaway of the created will from the immutable and infinite Good. But evil cannot strictly be

termed a 'thing', since this word implies a positive reality, and if moral evil were a positive reality, it would have to be ascribed to the Creator, unless one were willing to attribute to the creature the power of positive creation out of nothing. Evil, then, is 'that which falls away from essence and tends to non-being It tends to make that which is cease to be." Everything in which there is order and measure is to be ascribed to God, but in the will which turns away from God there is disorder. The will itself is good, but the absence of right order, or rather the privation of right order, for which the human agent is responsible, is evil. Moral evil is thus a privation of right order in the created will.

This doctrine of evil as a privation was the doctrine of Plotinus, and in it Augustine found the answer to the Manichees. For if evil is a privation and not a positive thing, one is no longer faced with the choice of either ascribing moral evil to the good Creator or of inventing an ultimate evil principle responsible for evil. This doctrine was adopted by the Scholastics generally from Augustine and finds adherents among several modern philosophers of note, Leibniz, for example.

If the principle of morality is love of God and the essence of evil is a falling-away from God, it follows that the human race can be divided into two great camps, that of those who love God and prefer God to self and that of those who prefer self to God: it is by the character of their wills, by the character of their dominant love, that men are ultimately marked. Augustine sees the history of the human race as the history of the dialectic of these two principles, the one in forming the City of Jerusalem, the other the City of Babylon. 'Let each one question himself as to what he loveth; and he shall find of which (city) he is a citizen.' 'There are two kinds of love; . . . These two kinds of love distinguish the two cities established in the human race ... in the so to speak commingling of which the ages are passed.' 'You have heard and know that there are two cities, for the present mingled together in body, but in heart separated.'

To the Christian history is necessarily of profound importance. It was in history that man fell, in history that he was redeemed: it is in history, progressively, that the Body of Christ on earth grows and develops and that God's plan is unfolded. To the Christian, history apart from the data of revelation is shorn of its significance: it is small wonder, then, that Augustine looked on history from the Christian standpoint and that his outlook was primarily spiritual and moral. If we speak of a philosophy of history in Augustine's thought, the word 'philosophy' must be understood in a wide sense as Christian wisdom. The knowledge of the facts of history may be mainly a natural knowledge, for example, knowledge of the existence and development of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires; but the principles by which the facts are interpreted and given meaning and judged are not taken from the facts themselves. The temporal and passing is judged in the light of the eternal. That Augustine's tendency to concentrate on the aspect of Assyria under which it appeared to him as an embodiment of the City of Babylon (in the moral sense) would not commend itself to the modern historian is understandable enough; but Augustine was not concerned to play the part of an historian in the ordinary sense, but rather to give the 'philosophy' of history as he envisaged it, and the 'philosophy' of history, as he understood it, is

the discernment of the spiritual and moral significance of historical phenomena and events. Indeed, so far as there can be a philosophy of history at all, the Christian at least will agree with Augustine that only a Christian philosophy of history can ever approach adequacy: to the non-Christian the position of the Jewish people, for example, is radically different from the position it occupies in the eyes of the Christian. If it were objected, as it obviously could be, that this involves a theological interpretation of history, a reading of history in the light of dogma, the objection would not cause Augustine any difficulty, since he never pretended to make that radical dichotomy between theology and philosophy which is implied in the objection.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

To treat the moral theory of St. Thomas in detail would be impracticable here, but a discussion of some important points may help to show its relation to the Aristotelian ethic.

In the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle argues that every agent acts for an end and that the human agent acts for happiness, with a view to the acquisition of happiness. Happiness, he says, must consist in an activity, primarily in the activity which perfects the highest faculty in man directed to the highest and noblest objects. He comes to the conclusion, therefore, that human happiness consists primarily in theoria, in contemplation of the highest objects, chiefly in the contemplation of the unmoved Mover, God, though he held that the enjoyment of other goods, such as friendship and, in moderation, external goods, is necessary to perfect happiness.1 Aristotle's ethic was thus eudaemonistic in character, teleological, and markedly intellectualist, since it is clear that for him contemplation meant philosophical contemplation: he was not referring to a religious phenomenon, such as the ecstasy of Plotinus. Moreover, the end (telos) of moral activity is an end to be acquired in this life: as far as the ethics of Aristotle are concerned there is no hint of any vision of God in the next life, and it is indeed questionable whether he believed in personal immortality at all. Aristotle's truly happy man is the philosopher, not the saint.

Now, St. Thomas adopted a similar eudaemonological and teleological standpoint, and his theory of the end of human conduct is in some respects intellectualist; but a change of emphasis soon becomes visible which marks a very considerable difference between his ethical theory and that of Aristotle. The only acts of man which fall properly within the moral sphere are free acts, acts which proceed from man precisely as man, as a rational and free being. These human acts (actioneshumanae, as distinguished from actioneshominis) proceed from man's will, and the object of the will is the good (bonum). It is the prerogative of man to act for an end which he has apprehended, and every human act is performed for an apprehended end; but the particular end or good, for the attainment of which a particular human act is performed, does not and cannot fully perfect and satisfy the human will, which is set towards the universal good and can find its satisfaction only in the attainment of the universal good. What is the universal good in the concrete? It cannot consist in riches, for example, for riches are simply a means to an end, whereas the universal good is necessarily the final end and cannot be itself a means to a further

end. It cannot consist in sensible pleasure, since this perfects only the body, not the whole man; nor can it consist in power, which does not perfect the whole man or satisfy the will completely and which, moreover, can be abused, whereas it is inconceivable that the ultimate and universal good can be abused or employed for an unworthy or evil purpose. It cannot consist even in consideration of the speculative sciences, since philosophic speculation certainly does not satisfy completely the human intellect and will. Our natural knowledge is drawn from sense-experience; yet man aspires to a knowledge of the ultimate cause as it is in itself, and this cannot be acquired by metaphysics. Aristotle may have said that the good of man consists in the consideration of the speculative sciences, but he was speaking of imperfect happiness, such as is attainable in this life. Perfect happiness, the ultimate end, is not to be found in any created thing, but only in God, who is Himself the supreme and infinite Good. God is the universal good in the concrete, and though He is the end of all things, of both rational and irrational creatures, it is only rational creatures who can attain this final good by way of knowledge and love: it is only rational creatures who can attain the vision of God in which alone perfect happiness lies. In this life man can know that God exists and he can attain an imperfect and analogical notion of God's nature, but it is only in the next life that he can know God as He is in Himself and no other end can fully satisfy man.

Aristotle, says St. Thomas, was speaking of imperfect happiness such as is attainable in this life; but Aristotle, as I have already mentioned, says nothing in the Ethics of any other happiness. His ethic was an ethic of human conduct in this life, whereas St. Thomas has not proceeded far before he has brought in consideration of the perfect happiness attainable only in the next life, this happiness consisting principally in the vision of God, though it also includes, of course, satisfaction of the will, while other goods, such as the society of friends, contribute to the beneesse of beatitude, though no good save God is necessary for happiness. At once, therefore, St. Thomas's moral theory is seen to move on a different plane from that of Aristotle, since however much St. Thomas may use Aristotle's language, the introduction of the next life and of the vision of God into moral theory is foreign to the thought of Aristotle. What Aristotle calls happiness, St. Thomas calls imperfect happiness or temporal happiness or happiness as attainable in this life, and this imperfect happiness he regards as ordered to perfect happiness, which is attainable only in the next life and consists principally in the vision of God.

St. Thomas's statement that the perfect happiness of man consists in the vision of God raises a very difficult problem for any interpreter of the Saint's moral theory, a problem which is of much greater importance than might at first appear. The ordinary way of presenting the Thomist ethic has been to assimilate it to the ethic of Aristotle so far as is consistent with St. Thomas's position as a Christian, and to say that St. Thomas as moral philosopher considers man 'in the natural order' without reference to his supernatural end. When he speaks of beatitude as a moral philosopher he would, therefore, be speaking of natural beatitude, that attainment of the supreme Good, God, which is open to man in the natural order, without supernatural grace being necessary. His difference from Aristotle would lie in the fact that he, unlike the latter, introduces

consideration of the next life, concerning which Aristotle is silent. Beatitude would consist principally in the natural knowledge and love of God attainable in this life (imperfect natural beatitude) and in the next life (perfect natural beatitude). Those actions would be good which lead to or are compatible with the attainment of such beatitude, while those actions would be bad which are incompatible with the attainment of such beatitude. The fact that St. Thomas speaks of the attainment of the vision of the divine essence (which is man's supernatural end and is unattainable without supernatural grace) when we would expect him to continue speaking as a moral philosopher would, then, be due to the fact that he makes in practice no very methodical separation between the roles of philosopher and theologian and speaks sometimes as the one, sometimes as the other, without any clear indication of the change. Alternatively one would have to explain away references to the vision of God as meaning not the supernatural vision of the divine essence, but merely the knowledge of God which would be attainable by man in the next life, had man no supernatural end. In some such way one would make of St. Thomas a moral philosopher who completed the Aristotelian ethic by introducing consideration of the next life.

This is true of St. Thomas's moral teaching in the Summae, I do not mean to imply that St. Thomas rejected the possibility of a purely philosophical ethic.

Unfortunately for upholders of this interpretation not only does St. Thomas seem to refer to the vision of God in the proper sense, but he even speaks of a 'natural desire' for the vision of God. 'Ultimate and perfect beatitude can consist only in the vision of the divine essence. This, say some commentators, does not refer to the vision of God as supreme good, as He is in Himself, but only to the vision of God as first cause. But how could St. Thomas speak of knowledge of God as first cause as though such knowledge were or could be a vision of the divine essence? By the natural light of reason we can know that God is first cause, but St. Thomas states that 'for perfect beatitude it is required that the intellect should arrive at the very essence of the first cause'. Again, 'Ultimate beatitude consists in the vision of the divine essence, which is the very essence of goodness.' For the attainment of that vision there is in man a natural desire, as man naturally desires to know the essence, the nature of the first cause. Whether or not St. Thomas was right in saying this, it is to me inconceivable that he meant to refer only to what Cajetan calls a potentiaobedientialis: what can a 'natural desire' be, if it is not something positive? On the other hand, it is out of the question to suppose that St. Thomas meant to deny the supernatural and gratuitous character of the beatific vision of God. Some commentators have got rid of the difficulty by saying that St. Thomas meant to affirm the presence in man of a conditional natural desire, that is, conditional on God's elevating man to the supernatural order and giving him the means to attain the supernatural end. This is a reasonable position, no doubt; but is it necessary to suppose that by a natural desire St. Thomas meant more than a desire to know the nature of the first cause, a desire which in the concrete, that is, given man's elevation to the supernatural order and his being destined for a supernatural end, means a desire for the vision of God? In other words, I suggest that St. Thomas is considering man in the concrete and that when he says that there is in man a 'natural desire' to know God's essence, and so to attain the vision of God, he

means that man's natural desire to know as much as possible of the ultimate cause is, in the concrete and actual order, a desire to see God. Just as the will is naturally set towards the universal good and this movement of the will can reach satisfaction and quiescence only in the possession of God, so the intellect is made for truth and can be satisfied only by the vision of the absolute Truth.

It may be objected that this implies either that man has a natural desire for the beatific vision (using the word natural as opposed to supernatural), and in this case it is difficult to safeguard the gratuity of the supernatural order, or that by 'natural' St. Thomas means simply natural in the sense in which we frequently use the word, as opposed to 'unnatural' rather than supernatural, which is to interpret him in an arbitrary and unjustifiable fashion. But what I am suggesting is that St. Thomas is speaking pretty well as St. Augustine might speak, that he is considering man in the concrete, as called to a supernatural end, and that when he says that man has a natural desire to know the essence of God, he does not mean to imply that man in a hypothetical state of nature would have had such a natural desire, whether absolute or conditional, of seeing God, but simply that the term of the natural movement of the human intellect towards truth is de facto the vision of God, not because the human intellect can of itself see God, whether in this life or the next, but because de facto the only end of man is a supernatural end. I do not think that St. Thomas is considering the hypothetical state of nature at all, when he speaks of the desideriumnaturale, and if this is so, it obviously means that his moral theory is not and cannot be a purely philosophical theory. His moral theory is partly theological and partly philosophical: he utilises the Aristotelian ethic but fits it into a Christian setting. After all, Aristotle was himself considering man in the concrete, as far as he knew what man in the concrete actually is, and St. Thomas, who knew much better than Aristotle what man in the concrete actually is, was fully justified in utilising the thought of Aristotle when he believed it to be correct and found it compatible with his Christian standpoint.

It is perfectly true that St. Thomas speaks of imperfect beatitude, of man's temporal good, and so on; but that does not mean that he is considering man in a hypothetical state of pure nature. If St. Thomas says that the Church is instituted to help man to attain his supernatural good, and the State to help man to attain his temporal good, it would be absurd to conclude that in considering man in relation to the State he is considering man in a purely hypothetical condition: he is considering actual man in certain aspects and functions. It is not that St. Thomas ignores the fact that the attainment of man's true end exceeds man's unaided powers, but that in his moral theory he considers man as set towards, as called to that end. When answering the question if beatitude, once attained, can be lost, he answers that the imperfect beatitude of this life can be lost, but that the perfect beatitude of the next life cannot be lost, since it is impossible for anyone who has once seen the divine essence to desire not to see it. This shows clearly enough that he is speaking of supernatural beatitude. In the reply to the second objection he says that the will is ordered to the last end by a natural necessity; but this does not mean either that the last end in question is purely natural or, if it is supernatural, that God could not have created man without directing him

to this end. The will necessarily desires happiness, beatitude, and de facto this beatitude can be found only in the vision of God: we can say, therefore, that the concrete human being necessarily desires the vision of God.

It seems to me that this interpretation is confirmed by the doctrine of the Summa contra Gentiles. First of all St. Thomas argues that the end of every intellectual substance is to know God. All creatures are ordered to God as to their last end, and rational creatures are ordered to God principally and peculiarly by way of their highest faculty, the intellect. But though the end and happiness of man must consist principally in the knowledge of God, the knowledge in question is not that knowledge which is obtained philosophically, .by demonstration. By demonstration we come to know rather what God is not than what He is, and man cannot be happy unless he knows God as He is. Nor can human happiness consist in the knowledge of God which is obtained through faith, even though by faith we are able to know more about God than we can learn through philosophical demonstration. The 'natural desire' is satisfied by the attainment of the final end, complete happiness, but 'knowledge by faith does not satisfy the desire, but rather inflames it, since everyone desires to see what he believes'. Man's final end and happiness must consist, therefore, in the vision of God as He is in Himself, in the vision of the divine essence, a vision which is promised us in the Scriptures and by which man will see God 'face to face'. It is only necessary to read St. Thomas in order to see that he is talking of the vision of the divine essence properly speaking. On the other hand, it is only necessary to read St. Thomas in order to see that he is perfectly aware that 'no created substance can by its natural power come to see God in His essence' and that to attain this vision supernatural elevation and aid are required.

What, then, of the 'natural desire'? Does not St. Thomas explicitly say that 'since it is impossible for a natural desire to be in vain (inane), and since this would be the case if it were not possible to arrive at the knowledge of the divine substance, which all minds naturally desire, it is necessary to say that it is possible for the substance of God to be seen by the intellect', even though this vision cannot be attained in this life? If there is really a 'natural desire' for the vision of God, is not the gratuitous character of supernatural beatitude endangered? In the first place it may be pointed out once again that St. Thomas explicitly states that man cannot attain to the vision of God by his own efforts: its attainment is made possible only through the grace of God, as he clearly affirms.' But there certainly is a difficulty in seeing how the grace of God, which alone makes possible the attainment of the final end, is not in some sense due to man, if there is a 'natural desire' for the vision of God and if it is impossible for a natural desire to be in vain. To come to a definitive conclusion as to what St. Thomas precisely understood by desideriumnaturale in this connection may not be possible; but it seems legitimate to suppose that he was regarding the natural desire of the intellect to know absolute Truth in the light of the actual and concrete order. Man's intellect has a natural orientation towards happiness, which must consist primarily in the knowledge of the absolute Truth; but man in the concrete actual order has been destined for a supernatural end and cannot be satisfied with anything less.

Regarding the natural desire in the light of the facts known by revelation, one can say, then, that man has a 'natural desire' for the vision of God.

In the De Veritate1 St. Thomas says that man, according to his nature, has a natural appetite for aliquacontemplatiodivinorum, such as it is possible for a man to obtain by the power of nature, and that the inclination of his desire towards the supernatural and gratuitous end (the vision of God) is the work of grace. In this place, then, St. Thomas does not admit a 'natural desire' in the strict sense for the vision of God, and it seems to me only reasonable to suppose that when in the Summa Theologica and the Summa contra Gentiles he speaks of a natural desire for the vision of God, he is not speaking strictly as a philosopher but as a theologian and philosopher combined, that is, presupposing the supernatural order and interpreting the data of experience in the light of that presupposition. In any case what has been said should be sufficient to show the difference between Aristotle's and St. Thomas's views of the end of man.

The will, therefore, desires happiness, beatitude, as its end, and human acts are good or bad in so far as they are or are not means to the attainment of that end. Happiness must, of course, be understood in relation to man as such, to man as a rational being: the end is that good which perfects man as a rational being, not indeed as a disembodied intellect, for man is not a disembodied intellect, but in the sense that the perfecting of his sensitive and vegetative tendencies must be accomplished in subordination to his primary tendency, which is rational: the end is that which perfects man as such, and man as such is a rational being, not a mere animal. Every individual human act, that is to say, every deliberate act, is either in accordance with the order of reason (its immediate end being in harmony with the final end) or out of accordance with the order of reason (its immediate end being incompatible with the final end), so that every human act is either good or bad. An indeliberate act, such as the reflex act of brushing away a fly, may be 'indifferent'; but no human, deliberate act, can be indifferent, neither good nor bad.

St. Thomas follows Aristotle in treating the moral and intellectual virtues as habits, as good qualities or habits of the mind, by which a man lives rightly. The virtuous habit is formed by good acts and facilitates the performance of subsequent acts for the same end. It is possible to have the intellectual virtues with the exception of prudence without the moral virtues, and it is possible to have the moral virtues without the intellectual virtues, with the exception of prudence and of understanding.1 Moral virtue consists in a mean (in medioconsistit). The object of moral virtue is to secure or facilitate conformity to the rule of reason in the appetitive part of the soul; but conformity implies the avoidance of the extremes of excess and defect, it means that the appetite or passion is reduced to the rule of reason. Of course, if one is considering simply conformity to reason, virtue is an extreme and all nonconformity with the rule of reason, whether by excess or defect, constitutes the other extreme (to say that virtue consists in a mean is not to say that it consists in mediocrity); but if one considers moral virtue in regard to the matter with which it is concerned, the passion or appetite in question, it is then seen to consist in a mean. The adoption of this theory of Aristotle might seem to make it difficult to defend virginity or voluntary poverty, for example, but St. Thomas points out that complete chastity, for instance, is

virtuous only when it is in conformity with reason enlightened by God. If it is observed in accordance with God's will or invitation and for man's supernatural end, it is in accord with the rule of reason and so is, in St. Thomas's use of the word, a mean: if, however, it were observed out of superstition or vainglory, it would be an excess. In general, a virtue may be looked at as an extreme in relation to one circumstance, as a mean in regard to another. In other words, the fundamental factor in virtuous action is conformity to the rule of reason, directing man's acts to his final end.

The rule and measure of human acts is the reason, for it belongs to the reason to direct a man's activity towards his end. It is reason, therefore, which gives orders, which imposes obligation. But this does not mean that the reason is the arbitrary source of obligation or that it can impose whatever obligations it likes. The primary object of the practical reason is the good, which has the nature of an end, and the practical reason, recognising the good as the end of human conduct, enunciates its first principle, ‘good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided.’ But the good for man is that which befits his nature, that to which he has a natural inclination as a rational being. Thus man, in common with all other substances, has a natural inclination to the preservation of his being, and reason, reflecting on this inclination, orders that the means necessary to the preservation of life are to be taken. Conversely, suicide is to be avoided. Again, man, in common with other animals, has a natural inclination to the propagation of the species and the bringing up of children, while as a rational being he has a natural inclination to seek out the truth, especially concerning God. Reason, therefore, orders that the species is to be propagated and children educated, and that truth is to be sought, especially that truth which is necessary to the attainment of man's end. Obligation, therefore, is imposed by reason, but it is founded immediately on human nature itself; the moral law is rational and natural, in the sense of not being arbitrary or capricious: it is a natural law, lexnaturalis, which has its basis in human nature itself, though it is enunciated and dictated by reason.

As the natural law is founded in human nature as such, in that nature which is the same in all men, it has regard primarily to those things which are necessary to human nature. There is an obligation, for example, to preserve one's life, but that does not mean that every man has to preserve his life in exactly the same way: a man must eat, but it does not follow that he is under an obligation to eat this or that, this much or that much. In other words, acts may be good and according to nature without being obligatory. Moreover, though reason sees that no man can preserve his life without eating and that no man can order his life rightly without knowledge of God, it also sees that the precept of propagating the species falls not on the individual, but on the multitude, and that it is fulfilled, even though not all individuals actually fulfil it. (This would be St. Thomas's answer to the objection that virginity is contrary to the natural law.)

From the fact that the natural law is founded on human nature itself it follows that it cannot be changed, since human nature remains fundamentally the same, and that it is the same for all. It can be 'added to', in the sense that precepts useful for human life can be promulgated by divine

law and by human law, even though these precepts do not fall directly under the natural law; but it cannot be changed, if by change is meant subtraction from the law.

The primary precepts of the natural law (e.g. life is to be preserved) are entirely unchangeable, since their fulfilment is absolutely necessary for the good of man, while the proximate conclusions from the primary precepts are also unchangeable, though St. Thomas admits that they may be changed in a few particular cases on account of special reasons. But St. Thomas is not thinking here of what we call 'hard cases': he is thinking rather of cases like that of the Israelites who made off with the goods of the Egyptians. His meaning is that in this case God, acting as supreme lord and owner of all things rather than as legislator, transferred the ownership of the goods in question from the Egyptians to the Israelites, so that the Israelites did not really commit theft. Thus St. Thomas's admission of the changeability of the secondary precepts of the natural law in particular cases refers rather to what the Scholastics call a mutatiomateriae than to a change in the precept itself: it is rather that the circumstances of the act are so changed that it no longer falls under the prohibition than that the prohibition itself is changed.

Moreover, precisely because the natural law is founded on human nature itself, men cannot be ignorant of it in regard to the most general principles, though it is true that they may fail on account of the influence of some passion to apply a principle to a particular case. As regards the secondary precepts men may be ignorant of these through prejudice or passion, and that is all the more reason why the natural law should be confirmed by positive divine law.

Obligation, as we have seen, is the binding of the free will to perform that act which is necessary for the attainment of the last end, an end which is not hypothetical (an end which may or may not be desired) but absolute, in the sense that the will cannot help desiring it, the good which must be interpreted in terms of human nature. So far the ethic of St. Thomas follows closely that of Aristotle. Is there nothing further? Is the natural law, promulgated by reason, without any transcendental foundation? Aristotle's eudaemonological ethic fitted in, of course, with his general finalistic outlook; but it was not grounded in God and could not be, since the Aristotelian God was not Creator nor did He exercise providence: He was final cause, but not first efficient cause or supreme exemplary cause. In St. Thomas's case, however, it would be extremely strange were ethics to be left without demonstrable connection with metaphysics, and in fact we find that connection insisted on.

On the supposition that God created and rules the world (the proof of this does not pertain to ethics), it follows that the divine wisdom must be conceived as ordering man's actions towards his end. God, to speak somewhat anthropomorphically, has an exemplar idea of man and of the acts which fulfil man's nature and which are required for the attainment of man's end, and the divine wisdom as directing man's acts to the attainment of that end constitutes the eternal law. As God is eternal and His idea of man eternal, the promulgation of the law is eternal ex parte Dei, though it is not eternal ex parte creaturae. This eternal law, existing in God, is the origin and fount of the natural law, which is a participation of the eternal law. The natural law is expressed

passively in man's natural inclinations, while it is promulgated by the light of reason reflecting on those inclinations, so that inasmuch as every man naturally possesses the inclinations to the end of man and possesses also the light of reason, the eternal law is sufficiently promulgated for every man. The natural law is the totality of the universal dictates of right reason concerning that good of nature which is to be pursued and that evil of man's nature which is to be shunned, and man's reason could, at least in theory, arrive by its own light at a knowledge of these dictates or precepts. Nevertheless, since, as we have seen, the influence of passion and of inclinations which are not in accordance with right reason may lead men astray and since not all men have the time or ability or patience to discover the whole natural law for themselves, it was morally necessary that the natural law should be positively expressed by God, as was done by the revelation of the Decalogue to Moses. It must also be added that man has de facto a supernatural end, and in order that he should be able to attain this supernatural end, it was necessary that God should reveal the supernatural law, over and above the natural law. 'Since man is destined to the end of eternal beatitude, which exceeds the capacity of the human natural faculty, it was necessary that besides the natural law and human law he should also be directed to his end by a divinely given law.'

It is very important to realise clearly that the foundation of the natural law in the eternal law, the metaphysical foundation of the natural law, does not mean that the natural law is capricious or arbitrary; that it could be otherwise than it is: the eternal law does not depend primarily on the divine will but on the divine reason, considering the exemplar idea of human nature. Given human nature, the natural law could not be otherwise than it is. On the other hand, we must not imagine that God is subject to the moral law, as something apart from Himself. God knows His divine essence as imitable in a multiplicity of finite ways, one of those ways being human nature, and in that human nature He discerns the law of its being and wills it: He wills it because He loves Himself, the supreme Good, and because He cannot be inconsistent with Himself. The moral law is thus ultimately founded on the divine essence itself and so cannot change: God wills it certainly, but it does not depend on any arbitrary act of the divine will. Hence to say that the moral law does not depend primarily on the divine will is not at all equivalent to saying that there is a moral law which in some mysterious way stands behind God and rules God: God is Himself the supreme Value and the source and measure of all value: values depend on Him, but in the sense that they are participations or finite reflections of God, not in the sense that God arbitrarily confers on them their character as values. St. Thomas's doctrine of the metaphysical foundation, the theistic foundation, of the moral law in no way threatens its rational or necessary character: ultimately the moral law is what it is because God is what He is, since human nature, the law of whose being is expressed in the natural law, itself depends on God.

Finally one can point out that St. Thomas's realisation of God as Creator and supreme Lord led him, in company, of course, with other Scholastics, to recognise natural values which Aristotle did not envisage and could not envisage once given his view of God. To take one example, that of the virtue of religion (religio). Religion is the virtue by which men pay to God the worship and reverence which they owe Him as 'first Principle of the creation and government of things'. It

is superior to the other moral virtues, inasmuch as it is more closely concerned with God, the last end.1 It is subordinate to the virtue of justice (as a virtusannexa), inasmuch as through the virtue of religion a man pays to God his debt of worship and honour, a debt which is owing in justice.2 Religion is thus grounded in man's relationship to God, as creature to Creator, as subject to Lord. As Aristotle did not look upon God as Creator nor as exercising conscious government and providence, but regarded Him as the final Cause alone, wrapped up in Himself and drawing the world unconsciously, he could not envisage a personal relationship between man and the unmoved Mover, though he expected, of course, that man would recognise and in a sense honour the unmoved Mover, as the noblest object of philosophic contemplation. St. Thomas, however, with his clear idea of God as Creator and as provident Governor of the universe, could and did envisage as man's primary duty the expression in act of the relationship which is bound up with his very being. The virtuous man of Aristotle is, in a sense, the most independent man, whereas the virtuous man of St. Thomas is, in a sense, the most dependent man, that is, the man who realises truly and fully expresses his relation of dependence on God.

4.2- Kant’s Duty- Based Ethics

In the following outline of Kant's moral theory we shall be concerned primarily with the metaphysical part of morals. That is to say, we shall be concerned primarily with what Kant calls the metaphysics of morals, not with speculative metaphysics. For Kant did not believe that morality should be founded on natural theology. For him belief in God is grounded in the moral consciousness rather than the moral law on belief in God. And our treatment will be based on the Groundwork and the second Critique. The work entitled Metaphysics of Morals does not seem to add much, if anything, which is required for a brief outline of the Kantian moral theory.

In the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (called by Abbott Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals) we are told that the metaphysics of morals is concerned to investigate 'the source of the practical principles which are to be found a priori in our reason'. The Groundwork itself is said to be 'nothing more than the investigation and establishment of the supreme principle of morality', and thus to constitute a complete treatise in itself. At the same time it does not profess to be a complete critique of the practical reason. Hence it leads on to the second Critique. This fact is indicated, indeed, by the titles of the main divisions of the Groundwork. For the first part deals with the transition from common or ordinary moral knowledge to philosophical moral knowledge; the second part with the transition from popular moral philosophy to the metaphysics of morals; and the third with the final step from the metaphysics of morals to the critique of the pure practical reason.

The structure of the Critique of Practical Reason recalls the structure of the first Critique. There is, of course, nothing corresponding to the Transcendental Aesthetic. But the work is divided into an Analytic (proceeding from principles to concepts rather than, as in the first Critique, from concepts to principles) and a Dialectic, dealing with the illusions of reason in its practical use, but also putting forward a positive standpoint. And Kant adds a Methodology of Pure Practical

Reason, treating of the method of making the objectively practical reason also subjectively practical.

That is to say, it considers the way in which the laws of the pure practical reason can be given access to and influence on the human mind. But this section is brief, and it is perhaps inserted more to supply something corresponding to the Transcendental Doctrine of Method in the first Critique than for any more cogent reason. The fact that the opening words of the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals have been quoted time and time again is no reason for not quoting them once more. 'It is impossible to conceive of anything in the world, or indeed out of it, which can be called good without qualification save only a good will.' But though Kant begins his treatise in this dramatic way, he does not consider that he is giving a startling new piece of information. For in his opinion he is making explicit a truth which is present at least implicitly in ordinary moral knowledge. However, it is incumbent on him to explain what he means by saying that a good will is the only good without qualification.

The concept of an unqualified good can be explained without much difficulty. External possessions, such as wealth, can be misused, as everybody knows. Hence they are not good without qualification. And the same can be said about mental talents, such as quickness of understanding. A criminal can possess and misuse mental talents of a high order. We can also say the same of natural traits of character, such as courage. They can be employed or manifested in pursuing an evil end. But a good will cannot be bad or evil in any circumstances. It is good without qualification.

This statement, taken by itself, seems to be a mere tautology. For a good will is good by definition; and it is analytically true to say that a good will is always good. Kant must therefore explain what he means by a good will. He refers, indeed, in the first place to a will which is good in itself and not merely in relation to something else. We may say, for example, of a painful surgical treatment that it is good, not in itself, but in relation to the beneficial effect which it is designed to bring about. But the Kantian concept of a good will is the concept of a will which is always good in itself, by virtue of its intrinsic value, and not simply in relation to the production of some end, for example, happiness. We wish to know, however, when a will is good in itself, that is, when it has intrinsic value. According to Kant, a will cannot be said to be good in itself simply because it causes, for instance, good actions, for I may will, for instance, a good action which physical circumstances prevent me from performing. Yet my will can be none the less good. What makes it good? If we are to escape from mere tautology, we must give some content to the term 'good' when applied to the will and not content ourselves with saying that a good will is a good will or that a will is good when it is good.

To elucidate the meaning of the term 'good' when applied to the will, Kant turns his attention to the concept of duty which is for him the salient feature of the moral consciousness. A will which acts for the sake of duty is a good will. The matter has to be stated in this form if it is to be stated with accuracy, for the will of God is a good will, but it would be absurd to speak of God

performing His duty. For the concept of duty or obligation involves the concept of at least the possibility of self-conquest, of having to overcome obstacles. And the divine will is not conceived as subject to any possible hindrance in willing what is good. Hence to be quite accurate we cannot say that a good will is a will which acts for the sake of duty; we have to say that a will which acts for the sake of duty is a good will. However, Kant calls a will such as the divine will, which is conceived as always and necessarily good, a 'holy will', thus giving it a special name. And if we prescind from the concept of a holy will and confine our attention to a finite will subject to obligation, we can permit ourselves to say that a good Will is one which acts for the sake of duty. But the notion of acting for the sake of duty needs, of course, further elucidation. Kant makes a distinction between actions which are in accordance with duty and acts which are done for the sake of duty.His own example serves to make clear the nature of this distinction.

Let us suppose that a tradesman is always careful not to overcharge his customers. His behaviour is certainly in accordance with duty; but it does not necessarily follow that he behaves in this way for the sake of duty, that is, because it is his duty so to behave. For he may refrain from overcharging his customers simply from motives of prudence; for example, on the ground that honesty is the best policy. Thus the class of actions performed in accordance with duty is much wider than the class of actions performed for the sake of duty.

According to Kant, only those actions which are performed for the sake of duty have moral worth. He takes the example of preserving one's life. 'To preserve one's life is a duty, and further, everyone has an immediate inclination to do so.' These are the two presuppositions. Now, if I preserve my life simply because I have an inclination to do so, my action does not, in Kant's view, possess moral worth. To possess such worth my action must be performed because it is my duty to preserve my life; that is, out of a sense of moral obligation. Kant does not explicitly say that it is morally wrong to preserve my life because I desire to do so, for my action would be at least in accordance with duty and not incompatible with it, as suicide would be. But it has no moral value. On the one hand it is not a moral action; but on the other hand it can hardly be called an immoral action in the sense in which suicide is immoral.

This view may be incorrect; but Kant at any rate thinks that it represents the view which everyone who possesses moral convictions implicitly holds and which he will recognize as true if he reflects. Kant tends to complicate matters, however, by giving the impression that in his opinion the moral value of an action performed for the sake of duty is increased in proportion to a decrease in inclination to perform the action. In other words, he gives some ground for the interpretation that, in his view, the less inclination we have to do our duty, the greater is the moral value of our action if we actually perform what it is our duty to do. And this point of view leads to the strange conclusion that the more we hate doing our duty the better, provided that we do it. Or, to put the matter another way, the more we have to overcome ourselves to do our duty, the more moral we are. And, if this is admitted, it seems to follow that the baser a man's inclinations are, the higher is his moral value, provided that he overcomes his evil tendencies.

But this point of view is contrary to the common conviction that the integrated personality, in whom inclination and duty coincide, has achieved a higher level of moral development than the man in whom inclination and desire are at war with his sense of duty.

However, though Kant sometimes speaks in a way which appears at first sight at least to support this interpretation, his main point is simply that when a man performs his duty contrary to his inclinations, the fact that he acts for the sake of duty and not simply out of inclination is clearer than it would be if he had a natural attraction to the action. And to say this is not necessarily to say that it is better to have no inclination for doing one's duty than to have such an inclination. Speaking of the beneficent man or philanthropist, he asserts, indeed, that the action of doing good to others has no moral worth if it is simply the effect of a natural inclination, springing from a naturally sympathetic temperament.

But he does not say that there is anything wrong or undesirable in possessing such a temperament. On the contrary, actions arising from a natural satisfaction in increasing the happiness of others are 'proper and lovable'. Kant may have been a rigorist in ethics; but his concern to bring out the difference between acting for the sake of duty and acting to satisfy one's natural desires and inclinations should not be taken to imply that he had no use for the ideal of a completely virtuous man who has overcome and transformed all desires which conflict with duty. Nor should it be taken to mean that in his opinion the truly virtuous man would be without any inclinations at all. Speaking of the commandment in the Gospels to love all men, he remarks that love as an affection ('pathological' love, as he puts it) cannot be commanded, but that beneficence for duty's sake ('practical' love) can be commanded, even if a man has an aversion towards beneficent action. But he certainly does not say that it is better to have an aversion towards beneficent action, provided that one performs such actions when it is one's duty to do so, than to have an inclination towards it.

On the contrary, he explicitly asserts that it is better to do one's duty cheerfully than otherwise. And his moral ideal, as will be seen later, was the greatest possible approximation to complete virtue, to the holy will of God.

So far we have learned that a good will is manifested in acting for the sake of duty, and that acting for the sake of duty must be distinguished from acting out of mere inclination or desire. But we require some more positive indication of what is meant by acting for the sake of duty. And Kant tells us that it means acting out of reverence for law, that is, the moral law. 'Duty is the necessity of acting out of reverence for the law.' Now, by law Kant means law as such. To act for the sake of duty is to act out of reverence for law as such. And the essential characteristic (the form, we may say) of law as such is universality; that is to say, strict universality which does not admit of exceptions. Physical laws are universal; and so is the moral law. But whereas all physical things, including man as a purely physical thing, conform unconsciously and necessarily to physical law, rational beings, and they alone, are capable of acting in accordance with the idea

of law. A man's actions, therefore, if they are to have moral worth, must be performed out of reverence for the law.

Their moral worth is derived, according to Kant, not from their results, whether actual or intended, but from the maxim of the agent. And this maxim, to confer moral worth on actions, must be that of abiding by law, of obeying it, out of reverence for the law.

We are told, therefore, that the good will, the only good without qualification, is manifested in acting for the sake of duty; that duty means acting out of reverence for law; and that law is essentially universal. But this leaves us with a highly abstract, not to say empty, concept of acting for the sake of duty. And the question arises how it can be translated into terms of the concrete moral life.

Before we can answer this question, we must make a distinction between maxims and principles. A principle, in Kant's technical terminology, is a fundamental objective moral law, grounded in the pure practical reason. It is a principle on which all men would act if they were purely rational moral agents. A maxim is a subjective principle of volition. That is to say, it is a principle on which an agent acts as a matter of fact and which determines his decisions. Such maxims can be, of course, of diverse kinds; and they may or may not accord with the objective principle or principles of the moral law.

This account of the nature of maxims may seem to be incompatible with what has been said above about Kant's view that the moral worth of actions is determined by the agent's maxim. For if a maxim can be out of accord with the moral law, how can it confer moral worth on the actions prompted by it? To meet this difficulty we have to make a further distinction between empirical or material maxims and a priori or formal maxims. The first refer to desired ends or results while the second do not. The maxim which confers moral value on actions must be of the second type. That is to say, it must not refer to any objects of sensuous desire or to any results to be obtained by action; but it must be the maxim of obeying universal law as such. That is to say, if the subjective principle of volition is obedience to the universal moral law, out of reverence for the law, the actions governed by this maxim will have moral worth for they will have been performed for the sake of duty.

Having made these distinctions, we can return to the question how Kant's abstract concept of acting for the sake of duty can be translated into terms of the concrete moral life. 'As I have robbed the will of all impulses (or inducements) which could arise for it from following any particular law, there remains nothing but the universal conformity of actions to law in general, which should serve the will as a principle. That is to say, I am never to act otherwise than so that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law.' The word 'maxim' must be taken here to refer to what we have called empirical or material maxims. Reverence for law which gives rise to the formal maxim of acting in obedience to law as such demands that we should bring all our material maxims under the form of law as such, this form being universality.

We have to ask whether we could will that a given maxim should become a universal law. That is to say, could it assume the form of universality? Kant gives an example. Let us imagine a man in distress, who can extricate himself from his plight only by making a promise which he has no intention of fulfilling. That is to say, he can obtain relief only by lying. May he do so? If he does act in this way, his maxim will be that he is entitled to make a promise with no intention of fulfilling it (that is, that he is entitled to lie) if only by this means can he extricate himself from a distressful situation.

We may put the question in this form, therefore. Can he will that this maxim should become a universal law? The maxim, when universalized, would state that everyone may make a promise with no intention of keeping it (that is, that anyone may lie) when he finds himself in a difficulty from which he can extricate himself by no other means. According to Kant, this universalization cannot be willed. For it would mean willing that lying should become a universal law. And then no promises would be believed. But the man's maxim postulates belief in promises. Therefore he cannot adopt this maxim and at the same time will that it should become a universal law. Thus the maxim cannot assume the form of universality. And if a maxim cannot enter as a principle into a possible scheme of universal law, it must be rejected.

Far be it from me to suggest that this example is immune from criticism. But I do not wish, by discussing possible objections, to distract attention from the main point which Kant is trying to make. It seems to be this. In practice we all act according to what Kant calls maxims. That is to say, we all have subjective principles of volition. Now, a finite will cannot be good unless it is motivated by respect or reverence for universal law. In order, therefore, that our wills may be morally good, we must ask ourselves whether we can will that our maxims, our subjective principles of volition, should become universal laws. If we cannot do so, we must reject these maxims. If we can do so, that is if our maxims can enter as principles into a possible scheme of universal moral legislation, reason demands that we should admit and respect them in virtue of our reverence for law as such.

It is to be noted that up to this point Kant has been concerned with clarifying the idea of acting for the sake of duty. Further, in his opinion we have been moving in the sphere of what he calls the moral knowledge of common human reason. 'The necessity of acting from pure reverence for the practical law is that which constitutes duty, to which every other motive must give place, because it is the condition of a will being good in itself; and the worth of such a will is above everything. Thus, then, without leaving the moral knowledge of common human reason, we have arrived at its principle!1 Although men do not ordinarily conceive this principle in such an abstract form, yet it is known by them implicitly, and it is the principle on which their moral judgments rest.

The principle of duty that I ought never to act otherwise than so that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law, is a way of formulating what Kant calls the categorical imperative. And we can now turn our attention to this subject.

As we have seen, a distinction must be made between principles and maxims. The objective principles of morality may be also subjective principles of volition, functioning as maxims. But there may also be a discrepancy between the objective principles of morality on the one hand and a man's maxims or subjective principles of volition on the other. If we were all purely rational moral agents, the objective principles of morality would always govern our actions; that is to say, they would also be subjective principles of volition. In point of fact, however, we are capable of acting on maxims or subjective principles of volition which are incompatible with the objective principles of morality.

And this means that the latter present themselves to us as commands or imperatives. We thus experience obligation. If our wills were holy wills, there would be no question of command and no question of obligation. But inasmuch as our wills are not holy wills (though the holy will remains the ideal), the moral law necessarily takes for us the form of an imperative. The pure practical reason commands; and it is our duty to overcome the desires which conflict with these commands.

When defining an imperative, Kant makes a distinction between command and imperative. 'The conception of an objective principle, in so far as it is necessitating for a will, is called a command (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an imperative. All imperatives are expressed by an ought and exhibit thereby the relation of an objective law of reason to a will which, by reason of its subjective constitution, is not necessarily determined by it.' By speaking of the objective principle as being 'necessitating' for a will Kant does not mean, of course, that the human will cannot help obeying the law. The point is rather that the will does not necessarily follow the dictate of reason, with the consequence that the law appears to the agent as something external which exercises constraint or pressure on the will. In this sense the law is said to be 'necessitating' for the will.But the latter is not 'necessarily determined' by the law. Kant's terminology may be confusing; but he is not guilty of self-contradiction.

Now, there are three kinds of imperatives, corresponding to three different kinds or senses of good action. And as only one of these imperatives is the moral imperative, it is important to understand the Kantian distinction between the different types. Let us first consider the sentence, 'If you wish to learn French, you ought to take these means'. Here we have an imperative. But there are two things to notice. First, the actions commanded are conceived as being good with a view to attaining a certain end.

They are not commanded as actions which ought to be performed for their own sake, but only as a means. The imperative is thus said to be hypothetical. Secondly, the end in question is not one which everyone seeks by nature. A man may wish or not wish to learn French. The imperative simply states that if you wish to learn French, you ought to take certain means, that is, perform certain actions. This type of imperative is called by Kant a problematic hypothetical imperative or an imperative of skill.

There is no difficulty in seeing that this type of imperative is not the moral imperative. We have taken the example of learning French. But we might equally well have taken the example of becoming a successful burglar. 'If you wish to become a successful burglar, that is, if you wish to burgle and not to be found out, these are the means which you ought to take.' The imperative of skill, or the technical imperative as we might call it, has, in itself, nothing to do with morality. The actions commanded are commanded simply as useful for the attainment of an end which one may or may not desire to attain; and the pursuit mayor may not be compatible with the moral law.

In the second place let us consider the sentence, 'You desire happiness by a necessity of nature; therefore you ought to perform these actions'. Here again we have a hypothetical imperative, in the sense that certain actions are commanded as means to an end. But it is not a problematic hypothetical imperative. For the desire of happiness is not an end which we set before ourselves or leave aside as we like, in the way that we can choose or not choose to learn French, to become successful burglars, to acquire the carpenter's art, and so on. The imperative does not say, 'if you desire happiness': it asserts that you desire happiness. It is thus an assertoric hypothetical imperative.

Now, this imperative has been regarded in some ethical systems as a moral imperative. But Kant will not allow that any hypothetical imperative, whether problematic or assertoric, is the moral imperative. It seems to me that he is somewhat cavalier in his treatment of teleological ethical theories. I mean that he does not seem to give sufficient consideration to a distinction which has to be made between different types of teleological ethics. 'Happiness' may be regarded as a subjective state which is acquired by certain actions but which is distinct from these actions. In this case the actions are judged good simply as means to an end to which they are external. But 'happiness', if we follow, for instance, the customary way of translating Aristotle's eudaimonia, may be regarded as an objective actualization of the potentialities of man as man (that is, as an activity); and in this case the actions which are judged good are not purely external to the end. However,

Kant would probably say that we then have an ethic based on the idea of the perfection of human nature, and that, though this idea is morally relevant, it cannot supply the supreme principle of morality which he is seeking.

In any case Kant rejects all hypothetical imperatives, whether problematic or assertoric, as qualifying for the title of moral imperative. It remains, therefore, that the moral imperative must be categorical. That is to say, it must command actions, not as means to any end, but as good in themselves. It is what Kant calls an apodictic imperative. 'The categorical imperative, which declares an action to be objectively necessary in itself without reference to any purpose, that is, without any other end, is valid as an apodictic practical principle.'·

What is this categorical imperative? All that we can say about it is purely a priori, that is, by considering the mere concept of a categorical imperative, is that it commands conformity to law in general. It commands, that is to say, that the maxims which serve as our principles of volition should conform to universal law.

'There is, therefore, only one categorical imperative, and it is this: Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.' But Kant immediately gives us another formulation of the imperative, namely to 'Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a Universal Law of Nature'.

In the last section we met the categorical imperative expressed in a negative form. So here also we must remember that Kant does not intend to imply that concrete rules of conduct can be deduced from the categorical imperative in the sense in which the conclusion of a syllogism can be deduced from the premises. The imperative serves, not as a premiss for deduction by mere analysis, but as a criterion for judging the morality of concrete principles of conduct. We might speak, however, of moral laws being derived in some sense from the categorical imperative. Suppose that I give money to a poor person in great distress when there is nobody else who has a greater claim on me. The maxim of my action, that is, the subjective principle of my volition, is, let us assume, that I will give alms to an individual who really needs such assistance when there is nobody else who has a prior claim on me. I ask myself whether I can will this maxim as a universal law valid for all. namely that one should give assistance to those who really need it when there is nobody else who has a prior claim on one. And I decide that I can so will.

My maxim is thus morally justified. As for the moral law which I will, this is obviously not deducible by mere analysis from the categorical imperative, for it introduces ideas which are not contained in the latter. At the same time the law can be said to be derived from the categorical imperative, in the sense that it is derived through applying the imperative.

Kant's general notion, therefore, is that the practical or moral law as such is strictly universal; universality being, as it were, its form. Hence all concrete principles of conduct must partake in this universality if they are to qualify for being called moral. But he does not make it at all clear what precisely he means by 'being able' or 'not being able' to will that one's maxim should become a universal law. One would perhaps be naturally inclined to understand him as referring to the absence or presence of logical contradiction when one tries to universalize one's maxim. But Kant makes a distinction. 'Some actions are of such a nature that their maxims cannot, without contradiction, be even conceived as a universal law.' Here Kant seems to refer to a logical contradiction between the maxim and its formulation as a universal law. In other cases, however, this 'intrinsic impossibility' is absent; 'but it is still impossible to will that the maxim should be raised to the universality of a law of nature, because such a will would contradict itself'. Here Kant seems to refer to cases in which a maxim could be given the formulation of a universal law without logical contradiction, though we could not will this law because the will, as expressed in the law, would be in antagonism or, as Kant puts it, contradiction with itself as

adhering steadfastly to some purpose or desire the attainment of which would be incompatible with the observance of the law.

A series of examples is, indeed, supplied. The fourth of these appears to be intended as an example of the second type of inability to will that one's maxim should become a universal law. A man enjoys great prosperity but sees that others are in misery and that he could help them. He adopts, however, the maxim of not concerning himself with the distress of others. Can this maxim be turned into a universal law? It can be done without logical contradiction for there is no logical contradiction in a law that those in prosperity ought not to render any assistance to those in distress. But, according to Kant, the prosperous man cannot will this law without a contradiction or antagonism within his will. For his original maxim was the expression of a selfish disregard for others, and it was accompanied by the firm desire of himself obtaining help from others if he should ever be in a state of misery, a desire which would be negated by willing the universal law in question.

Kant's second example appears to be intended as an example of a logical contradiction being involved in turning one's maxim into a universal law. A man needs money, and he can obtain it only by promising to repay it, though he knows very well that he will be unable to do so. Reflection shows him that he cannot turn the maxim (when I am in need of money, I will borrow it and promise to repay it, though I know that I shall not be able to do so) into a universal law without contradiction for the universal law would destroy all faith in promises, whereas the maxim presupposes faith in promises. From what he says Kant appears to have thought that the law itself would be self-contradictory, the law being that anyone who is in need and can obtain relief only by making a promise which he cannot fulfill may make such a promise. But it is difficult to see that this proposition is self-contradictory in a purely logical sense, though it may be that the law could not be willed without the inconsistencies to which Kant draws attention.

It may be said, of course, that we ought not to make heavy weather of concrete examples. The examples may be open to objection; but even if Kant has not given sufficient attention to their formulation, the theory which they are supposed to illustrate is the important thing. This would be an apt observation if the theory, in its abstract expression, were clear. But this does not seem to me to be the case. It seems to me that Kant has not properly clarified the meaning of 'being able' and 'not being able' to will that one's maxim should become a universal law. However, behind his examples we can see the conviction that the moral law is essentially universal, and that the making of exceptions for oneself from selfish motives is immoral. The practical reason commands us to rise above selfish desires and maxims which clash with the universality of law.

We have seen that according to Kant there is 'only one' categorical imperative, namely' Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law'. But we have also seen that he gives another formulation of the categorical imperative, namely 'Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a Universal Law of Nature'. And he gives further formulations. There seem to be five in all; but Kant tells us that

there are three. Thus he asserts that 'the three above-mentioned ways of presenting the principle of morality are at bottom so many formulas of the very same law, each of which involves the other two'. By giving several formulations of the categorical imperative Kant does not, therefore, intend to recant what he has said about there being 'only one' such imperative. The different formulations are intended, he tells us, to bring an idea of the reason nearer to intuition, by means of a certain analogy, and thereby nearer to feeling. Thus the formulation 'Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a Universal Law of Nature' makes use of an analogy between moral law and natural law. And elsewhere Kant expresses the formula in this way: 'Ask yourself whether you could regard the action which you propose to do as a possible object of your will if it were to take place according to a law of nature in a system of nature of which you were yourself a part.' This formula may be the same as the categorical imperative in its original form in the sense that the latter is its principle, as it were; but it is obvious that the idea of a system of Nature is an addition to the categorical imperative as first expressed.

Assuming, however, that the two formulations of the categorical imperative which have already been mentioned can be reckoned as one, we come to what Kant calls the second formulation or way of presenting the principle of morality. His approach to it is involved.

We have, Kant tells us, exhibited the content of the categorical imperative. 'But we have not yet advanced so far as to prove that there really is such an imperative, that there is a practical law which commands absolutely of itself and without any other impulses, and that the following of this law is duty. The question arises, therefore, whether it is a practically necessary law (that is, a law imposing obligation) for all rational beings that they should always judge their actions by maxims which they can will to be universal laws. If this is actually the case, there must be a synthetic a priori connection between the concept of the will of a rational being as such and the categorical imperative.

Kant's treatment of the matter is not easy to follow and gives the impression of being very roundabout. He argues that that which serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is the end. And if there is an end which is assigned by reason alone (and not by subjective desire), it will be valid for all rational beings and will thus serve as the ground for a categorical imperative binding the wills of all rational beings. This end cannot be a relative end, fixed by desire; for such ends give rise only to hypothetical imperatives. It must be, therefore, an end in itself, possessing absolute, and not merely relative, value. 'Assuming that there is something the existence of which has in itself absolute value, something which, as an end in itself, could be the ground of determinate laws, then in it and in it alone would lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, that is, of a practical law.'·

Again, if there is a supreme practical principle which is for the human will a categorical imperative, 'it must be one which, being derived from the conception of that which is necessarily an end for everyone because it is an end in itself, constitutes an objective principle of will, and can thus serve as a universal practical law' . Is there such an end? Kant postulates that man, and

indeed any rational being, is an end in itself. The concept of a rational being as an end in itself can therefore serve as the ground for a supreme practical principle or law. 'The ground of this principle is: rational nature exists as an end in. itself. The practical imperative will thus be as follows:‘So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, always at the same time as an end, and never merely as a means.’· The words 'at the same time' and 'merely' are of importance. We cannot help making use of other human beings as means. When I go to the hairdresser's, for example, I use him as a means to an end other than himself. But the law states that, even in such cases, I must never use a rational being as a mere means; that is, as though he had no value in himself except as a means to my subjective end.

Kant applies this formulation of the categorical imperative to the same cases which he used to illustrate the application of the imperative as originally formulated. The suicide, who destroys himself to escape from painful circumstances, uses himself, a person, as a mere means to a relative end, namely the maintenance of tolerable conditions up to the end of life. The man who makes a promise to obtain a benefit when he has no intention of fulfilling it or when he knows very well that he will not be in a position to keep it, uses the man to whom he makes the promise as a mere means to a relative end.

We may note in passing that Kant makes use of this principle in his treatise On Perpetual Peace. A monarch who employs soldiers in aggressive wars undertaken for his own aggrandizement or for that of his country is using rational beings as mere means to a desired end. Indeed, in Kant's view, standing armies should be abolished in the course of time because hiring men to kill or to be killed involves a use of them as mere instruments in the hands of the State and cannot easily be reconciled with the rights of humanity, founded on the absolute value of the rational being as such, and not treating it as a mere means to the attainment of the object of one's desires leads us on to the 'idea of the will of every rational being as making universal law'. In Kant's view, the will of man considered as a rational being must be regarded as the source of the law which he recognizes as universally binding. This is the principle of the autonomy, as contrasted with the heteronomy, of the will.

One of Kant's approaches to the autonomy of the will is more or less this. All imperatives which are conditioned by desire or inclination or, as Kant puts it, by 'interest' are hypothetical imperatives. A categorical imperative, therefore, must be unconditioned. And the moral will, which obeys the categorical imperative, must not be determined by interest. That is to say, it must not be heteronomous, at the mercy, as it were, of desires and inclinations which form part of a causally determined series.

It must, therefore, be autonomous. And to say that a moral will is autonomous is to say that it gives itself the law which it obeys. Now, the idea of a categorical imperative contains implicitly the idea of the autonomy of the will. But this autonomy can be expressed explicitly in a formulation of the imperative. And then we have the principle 'never to act on any other maxim than one which could, without contradiction, be also a universal law and accordingly always so

to act that the will could regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its maxim'. In the Critique of Practical Reason, the principle is expressed thus: 'So act that the maxim of your will could always at the same time be valid as a principle making universal law.'

Kant speaks of the autonomy of the will as 'the supreme principle of morality'· and as 'the sole principle of all moral laws and of the corresponding duties'. Heteronomy of the will, on the other hand, is 'the source of all spurious principles of morality';' and, far from being able to furnish the basis of obligation, 'is much rather opposed to the principle of obligation and to the morality of the will'.

If we accept the heteronomy of the will, we accept the assumption that the will is subject to moral laws which are not the result of its own legislation as a rational will. And though reference has already been made to some of the ethical theories which, according to Kant, accept this assumption, it will clarify Kant's meaning if we refer to them briefly once again. In the Critique of Practical Reason he mentions Montaigne as grounding the principles of morality on education, Mandeville as grounding them on the civil constitution (that is, on the legal system), Epicurus as grounding them on physical feeling (that is, pleasure), and Hutcheson as grounding them on moral feeling. All these theories are what Kant calls subjective or empirical, the first two referring to external empirical factors, the second two to internal empirical factors. In addition there are 'objective' or rationalistic theories; that is to say, theories which ground the moral law on ideas of reason. Kant mentions two types. The first, attributed to the Stoics and Wolff, grounds the moral law and obligation on the idea of inner perfection, while the second, attributed to Crusius, grounds the moral law and obligation on the will of God. All these theories are rejected by Kant. He does not say that they are all morally irrelevant; that is, that none of them has any contribution to make in the field of ethics. What he maintains is that none of them is capable of furnishing the supreme principles of morality and obligation. For instance, if we say that the will of God is the norm of morality, we can still ask why we ought to obey the divine will.

Kant does not say that we ought not to obey the divine will, if it is manifested. But we must in any case first recognize obedience to God as a duty. Thus before obeying God we must in any case legislate as rational beings. The autonomy of the moral will is thus the supreme principle of morality.

Obviously, the concept of the autonomy of the morally legislating will makes no sense unless we make a distinction in man between man considered purely as a rational being, a moral will, and man as a creature who is also subject to desires and inclinations which may conflict with the dictates of reason. And this is, of course, what Kant presupposes. The will or practical reason, considered as such, legislates, and man, considered as being subject to a diversity of desires, impulses and inclinations, ought to obey. In conceiving this theory of the autonomy of the will Kant was doubtless influenced to some extent by Rousseau. The latter, as we have seen, distinguished between the 'general will', which is always right and which is the real fount of

moral laws, and the merely private will, whether taken separately or together with other private wills as 'the will of all'. And Kant utilized these ideas within the context of his own philosophy. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the central position accorded by Kant in his ethical theory to the concept of the good will reflects, to some extent that is to say, the influence of his study of Rousseau.

The idea of rational beings as ends in themselves, coupled with that of the rational will or practical reason as morally legislating, brings us to the concept of a kingdom of ends. I understand by a kingdom the systematic union of rational beings through common laws. And because these laws have in view the relation of these beings to one another as ends and means, as Kant puts it, it can be called a kingdom of ends. A rational being can belong to his kingdom in either of two ways. He belongs to it as a member when, although giving laws, he is also subject to them. He belongs to it as a sovereign or supreme head when, while legislating, he is not subject to the will of any other. Perhaps Kant can be interpreted as meaning that every rational being is both member and sovereign; for no rational being is, when legislating and as legislating, subject to the will of another. But it is also possible, and perhaps more likely, that is to be taken as referring to God for Kant goes on to say that a rational being can occupy the place of supreme head only if he is 'a completely independent being without want and without limitation of power adequate to his will'.

This kingdom of ends is to be thought according to an analogy with the kingdom of Nature, the self-imposed rules of the former being analogous to the causal laws of the latter. It is, as Kant remarks, 'only an ideal'. At the same time it is a possibility. It 'would be actually realized through maxims conforming to the rule prescribed by the categorical imperative for all rational beings, if they were universally followed'. ' And rational beings ought to act as though they were through their maxims law-making members of a kingdom of ends. (Hence we have another variation of the categorical imperative.) The ideal of historical development is, we may say, the establishment of the kingdom of ends as an actuality.

Now, the categorical imperative states that all rational beings (that is, all rational beings who can be subject to an imperative at all) ought to act in a certain way. They ought to act only on those maxims which they can at the same time will, without contradiction, to be universal laws. The imperative thus states an obligation. But it is, according to Kant, a synthetic a priori proposition. On the one hand, the obligation cannot be obtained by mere analysis of the concept of a rational will. And the categorical imperative is thus not an analytic proposition. On the other hand, the predicate must be connected necessarily with the subject. For the categorical imperative, unlike a hypothetical imperative, is unconditioned and necessarily binds or obliges the will to act in a certain way. It is, indeed, a practical synthetic a priori proposition. That is to say, it does not extend our theoretical knowledge of objects, as is done by the synthetic a Priori propositions which we considered when discussing the first Critique. It is directed towards action, towards the performance of actions good in themselves, not towards our knowledge of empirical reality. But

it is none the less a proposition which is both a priori, independent of all desires and inclinations, and synthetic.

The question arises, therefore, how is this practical synthetic a priori proposition possible? We have here a question similar to that propounded in the first Critique and in the Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. But there is a difference. As we saw, there is no need to ask whether the synthetic a priori propositions of mathematics and physics are possible, if we once assume that these sciences do contain such propositions. For the development of the sciences shows their possibility. The only pertinent question is how they are possible.

In the case of a practical or moral synthetic a priori proposition, however, we have, according to Kant, to establish its possibility. Kant's statement of the problem seems to me to be somewhat confusing. It is not always easy to see precisely what question he is asking for he formulates it in different ways, and it is not always immediately evident that their meanings are equivalent.

However, let us take it that he is asking for a justification of the possibility of a practical synthetic a priori proposition. In his terminology this means asking what is the 'third term' which unites the predicate to the subject or, perhaps more precisely, which makes possible a necessary connection between predicate and subject. For if the predicate cannot be got out of the subject by mere analysis, there must be a third term which unites them. This 'third term' cannot be anything in the sensible world. We cannot establish the possibility of a categorical imperative by referring to anything in the causal series of phenomena. Physical necessity would give us heteronomy, whereas we are looking for that which makes possible the principle of autonomy. And Kant finds it in the idea of freedom. Obviously, what he does is to look for the necessary condition of the possibility of obligation and of acting for the sake of duty alone, in accordance with a categorical imperative; and he finds this necessary condition in the idea of freedom.

We might say simply that Kant finds 'in freedom' the condition of the possibility of a categorical imperative. But, according to him, freedom cannot be proved. Hence it is perhaps more accurate to say that the condition of the possibility of a categorical imperative is to be found 'in the idea of freedom'. To say this is not, indeed, to say that the idea of freedom is a mere fiction in any ordinary sense. In the first place the Critique of Pure Reason has shown that freedom is a negative possibility, in the sense that the idea of freedom does not involve a logical contradiction. And in the second place we cannot act morally, for the sake of duty, except under the idea of freedom. Obligation, 'ought', implies freedom, freedom to obey or disobey the law. Nor can we regard ourselves as making universal laws, as morally autonomous, save under the idea of freedom. Practical reason or the will of a rational being 'must regard itself as free; that is, the will of such a being cannot be a will of its own except under the idea of freedom'. The idea of freedom is thus practically necessary; it is a necessary condition of morality. At the same time the Critique of Pure Reason showed that freedom is not logically contradictory by showing that it must belong to the sphere of noumenal reality, and that the existence of such a sphere is not logically contradictory.

Ross's Intuitionism

Considering only consequences often seems inadequate for resolving moral decisions. The choice is frequently between duties. Thus a person may have a duty to protect society. At the same time, the person has a duty to uphold justice. When those duties conflict, which takes precedence?

At the outset of his book, Ross makes it clear that he rejects the consequentialist belief that what makes an act right is whether it produces more good. As he notes, consequences of conflicting courses of action frequently counter-balance each other. So, instead of a consequentialism, Ross argues that in deciding among ethical alternatives, we must determine which duties we fulfill by performing or not performing each alternative.

Consistent with this insight is Ross's rejection of the claim that there is but one thing of intrinsic value. For Ross there're four that are intrinsically worthwhile: pleasure, virtue, knowledge and the distribution of pleasure and pain according to virtue. Because these things don't share any single value-making property, they can't be reduced to any single intrinsic good. A theory of value that holds several things as being intrinsically valuable is termed axiological pluralism. Ross's pluralism, evident in his theory of value, also appears in his theory of obligation.
As Ross explains, an act may fall under a number of rules at once, not just a single rule. For example, the rule to keep a promise may in a given circumstance conflict with the rule not to do anyone harm. For example, suppose that a political candidate promises a wealthy builder that if he funds her campaign and she gets elected, she will deliver him an attractive government contract. The political candidate is subsequently elected and makes good her promise. As it happens, the contractor does good work and offers competitive prices. But of course, the political candidate doesn't even consider any other bids.On the one hand, the candidate has fulfilled her promise, which she may have viewed as binding.

W. D. Ross's theoretical understanding of morality explained in The Right and the Good was not meant to be comprehensive and determine right and wrong in every situation, but he doesn't think it is ever going to be possible to do so. He denies that there is one single overarching moral principle or rule. Instead, he thinks we can make moral progress one step at a time by learning more and more about our moral duties, and do our best at balancing conflicting obligations and values.

Ross proposes that (a) we have self-evident prima facie moral duties, and (b) some things have intrinsic value.

Prima facie duties

We have various prima facie duties, such as the duty of non-injury (the duty to not harm people) and the duty of beneficence (to help people). These duties are "prima facie" because they can be overriden. Duties can determine what we ought to do "nothing else considered" but they don't determine what we ought to do all things considered. Whatever we ought to do all things considered will override any other conflicting duties. For example, the promise to kill someone would give us a prima facie duty to fulfill our promise, but it would be overridden by our duty not to injure others.

Ross argues that we have (at the very least) the following duties:

1. Duty of fidelity – The duty to keep our promises. It refers to the duties that stem from our explicit and implicit promises. It includes the obligation to lie, contracts entered, oaths sworn.e.g. promise for help
2. Duty of reparation – The duty to try to pay for the harm we do to others. It involves duties stemming from our past wrong-doings toward others. It refers to restituting a damage done to somebody else. E.g. replacing a lost pen
3. Duty of gratitude – The duty to return or repay favors and services given to us by others or simply thank them for their kindness. In this case we are bound by obligations arising from relationships (friends or relatives). E.g. paying for someone's wedding
4. Duty of Justice and Fairness- is the duty involving distributing goods and services in a fair and equal manner whenever possible.It refers to giving to the deserving and denying the undeserving. E.g. imprisoning someone for a crimehe didn't commit.
5. Duty of beneficence – refers to the duties to try to bring about the happiness of other people whenever hat is possible. It involves the duty to other people whose virtue, intelligence or happiness we can improve. E.g. helping someone correct a costly mistake
6. Duty of Self-improvement- are duties involving making the best out of ourselves and making our lives the best they could be; the duty to improve our condition with respect to virtue, intelligence or happiness. E.g. seizing opportunities for self improvement
7. Duty of Non-Malfeasance – are dutiesnot to hurt , harm or sadden other people. We are normally obliged to avoid hurting others physically, emotionally and psychologically refuse to harm others.

Is this list complete? That is not obvious. We might have a duty to respect people beyond these duties, and we might have a duty to justice, equality, and/or fairness to praise, blame, reward, punish, and distribute goods according to merit. For example, it's unfair and disrespectful to blame innocent people because they don't merit blame —they weren't responsible for the immoral act.

The Theory of Right Action

When deciding what to do, we need to consider all the prima facie duties that are relevant. These duties often conflict and need to be weighed and balanced. When faced with conflicting prima

facie duties, we must follow the more obligatory i.e. our actual duty. The actual duty has the greatest amount of prima facie rightness over wrongness. But the question is how do we know which duties are stronger and which action 'best balances' all?

Self-evidence and intuition

Ross thinks we can know moral facts through intuition. What does it mean for these duties to be self-evident? It means that we can contemplate the duties and know they are true based on that contemplation—but only if we contemplate them in the right way.

Ross compares moral self-evidence to the self-evidence of mathematical axioms. A mathematical axiom that seems to fit the bill is the law of non-contradiction—We know that something can't be true and false at the same time.Intuition is the way contemplation can lead to knowledge of self-evidence. We often use the word "intuition" to refer to things we consider "common sense" or things we know that are difficult to prove using argumentation. Ross thinks we can know things without arguing for them, and he thinks that anything "truly intuitive" is self-evident.

Keep in mind that intuition doesn't necessarily let us know that something is self-evident immediately nor that intuitive contemplation is infallible. Consider that "123+321=444" could be self-evident. We might need to reach a certain maturity to know that this mathematical statement is true, and recognition of its truth is not necessarily immediate. It requires familiarity with addition and some people will need to spend more time contemplating than others.

Intrinsic value

Many utilitarians agree with Ross that pleasure is intrinsically good and pain is intrinsically bad. Pleasure is "good just for existing" and is worthy of being a goal. The decision to eat candy to attain pleasure "makes sense" if it has intrinsic value, and we all seem to think that eating candy to attain pleasure is at least sometimes a good enough reason to justify such an act. We have prima facie duties not to harm people at least to the extent that it causes something intrinsically bad (pain) and to help people at least to the extent that it produces something intrinsically good, like pleasure.

What's intrinsically good? Ross suggests that justice, knowledge, virtue, and "innocent pleasure" are all intrinsically good. However, minds, human life, and certain animal lifecould also have intrinsic value.

How do we use Ross's intuitionism?

First, we need to determine our duties and what has intrinsic value. Second, we need to determine if any of these duties or values conflict in our current situation. If so, we need to find a way to decide which duty is overriding. For example, I can decide to go to the dentist and get a cavity removed and this will cause me pain, but it is likely that it will help me avoid even more

pain in the future. Therefore, it seems clear that I ought to get the cavity removed. However, if I have two friends who both want to borrow my car at the same time and I won't be needing it for a while, I might have to choose between them and decide which friend needs the car the most or randomly decide between them if that's impossible.

Applying Ross's Intuitionism

Killing people – It is generally wrong to kill people because it (a) causes people pain, (b) prevents them from feeling future pleasure, and (c) destroys their knowledge. If and when killing people isn't wrong, we will need an overriding reason to do it. Perhaps it can be right to kill someone if it's necessary to save many other lives.

Stealing – It is wrong to steal insofar as it causes people pain, but it might be morally preferable to steal than to die. Our duties to our children could also justify stealing when it's the only option to feed them.

Courage – Virtue has intrinsic value, and courage is one specific kind of virtue. Courage is our ability to be motivated to do whatever it is we ought to do all things considered, even when we might risk our own well being in the process.

Education – Knowledge has intrinsic value, so we have a prima facie duty to educate people and seek education for ourselves.

Promising – Keeping a promise is already a prima facie duty, but it can be easily overriden when more important duties conflict with it. For example, you could promise to meet a friend for lunch, but your prima facie duty to help others might override your promise when a stranger is injured and you can help out.

Polluting – Polluting violates people's prima facie duty to noninjury, but polluting might be necessary for people to attain certain goods they need to live. In that case pollution could be appropriate.

Homosexual behavior – Homosexual behavior can be justified because it can help people attain pleasure, but we also have a prima facie duty to try not to endanger our own life or the life of others, so it's better to take certain precautions rather than have homosexual sex indiscriminately. This is no different than the morality of heterosexual sex.

Atheism – Being an atheist doesn't violate any of our prima facie duties, so it's not wrong. Telling one's parents that one is an atheist could cause momentary pain, but one's prima facie duties to be open and honest seems to override that concern in most situations. Additionally,

being open and honest in public about one's atheism could risk one's own well being, but it could also help create acceptance for atheists in general and help other atheists as a consequence.

Objections

1. It's not clear that intuitions are reliable. – I've mentioned before that both intuition and self-evidence have been questioned by philosophers. Many people have differing intuitions and argue different beliefs qualify as being "self-evident."

2. It's not clear how we resolve conflicts in duties. – Many philosophers don't think we can have duties that conflict. For example, utilitarians think we should maximize the good and no moral consideration that conflicts with that principle will count for anything. If our duties can conflict, then it's not obvious how we can decide which duty is overridden by the other.

Conclusion

Philosophers have found ethical theories useful because they help us decide why various actions are right and wrong. If it is generally wrong to punch someone then it is wrong to kick them for the same reason.

We can then generalize that it is wrong to "harm" people to help understand why punching and kicking tend to both be wrong, which helps us decide whether or not various other actions and institutions are wrong, such as capital punishment, abortion, homosexuality, atheism, and so forth.

All of the ethical theories above have various strengths and it is possible that more than one of them is true (or at least accurate). Not all moral theories are necessarily incompatible. Imagine that utilitarianism, the categorical imperative, and Stoic virtue ethics are all true. In that case true evaluative beliefs (e.g. human life is preferable) would tell us which values to promote (e.g. human life), and we would be more likely to have an emotional response that would motivate us to actually promote the value. We would feel more satisfied about human life being promoted (e.g. through a cure to cancer) and dissatisfied about human life being destroyed (e.g. through war).

Finally, what is right for one person would be right for everyone else in a sufficiently similar situation because the same reasons will justify the same actions.

CHAPTER FIVE – CHALLLENGES TO MORALITY

Regardless of the fact that many philosophers have dealt with the question of morality in the way that we saw in the previous chapters, there're some who question the very possibility of morality itself. Hence it's imperative to address the fundamental question that: Is morality, or at 'east traditional morality, even possible? Some have, indeed, maintained for various reasons that morality, as it is usually conceived, is *not* possible.In this chapter we shall take a look at some of the most influential theories concerning the possibility, or rather the impossibility of morality. *First,* there are those who judge right from the start that ethical propositions are meaningless. *Second,* we have the relativists or subjectivists, who argue that morality is a matter of individual judgment and that there are no common or universal moral obligation. *Third,* we have to reckon with those who locate the basis of morality in evolving human nature itself. Fourth, we must confront the determinist, who denies free will and asks; If all things including our choices, are completely predetermined, then how can there be any basis for moral responsibility?

5.1- THE CHALLENGE OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM

Logical Positivism challenges traditional morality by maintaining that its *language is meaningless.*

When we raise the question whether morality ismeaninglessit is important to introduce a distinction. There is a big difference between *existential* meaning (as in "I saw a meaningful movie") and *cognitive* meaning (as in "'Creech creech' is meaningless"). In the first case it is a question of relevance orimportance, whereas in the second case it is a question of *truth status.* To say of a claim that it is irrelevant (it has no existential meaning) is very different from saying that it is neither true nor false and therefore doesn't say anything literal at all (it has no cognitive meaning). In the logical positivists' challenge to morality, it is asserted that traditional claims, such as "X is good" or "You ought not to do Y," are cognitively meaningless; they are neither true nor false; they make no claim about anything whatsoever; they are no more significant than "Creech creech"; they are gibberish.

Logical positivism is a super empiricist philosophy after the manner of Hume. Do you recall Hume's pronouncement about casting into the flames those volumes containing claims that are neither relations of ideas (analytic) nor matters of fact (synthetic *a posteriori*)? At the heart of logical positivism lies the Humean-sounding V*erification principle:* A proposition is cognitively meaningful if and only if it's either analytic or in principle empirically verifiable. Say it another way: If you cannot conceive of the actual empirical conditions under which your claim could be shown to be true or false, then you are talking nonsense. The implications of this principle are, of course, devastating. All metaphysical claims (about God, souls, free will, necessary causal relations, underlying substances, etc.) are immediately excluded as *cognitively meaningless.* And the verificationists deliver an identical judgment on *moral claims.* They are

purportedly not empty analytic propositions, or tautologies, and they cannot even in principle be verified by means of sense experience, so they are *cognitively meaningless.*

How, then, do the logical positivists handle ethical claims and propositions? The most popular of their views is known as *emotivism.* Look at the word. You can tell immediately that this interpretation of moral propositions has something to do with *emotions.* Actually, emotivism is the view that moral propositions *are really* emotional expressions, expressions or pronouncements of one's own likes and dislikes: anger, elation, disgust, disapproval.

TWO MEANINGS OF "MEANING

- *Existential meaning:* The importance or relevance that something holds.
- *Cognitive meaning:* The truth/falsity status of a claim

THE VERIFICATION PRINCIPLE

A proposition is cognitively meaningful if and only if it is either analytic or *in* principle empirically verifiable.

At the same time, "they are attempts to arouse a similar feeling in others and to provoke action. Obviously, such expressions as "X is right" only reveal something about the one uttering them. They do not refer to any objective or factual or common state of affairs. They make no claim about anything "out there." They possess no truth value. In this way, the ethical statement "Stealing is wrong" is equivalent both to the exclamation "Stealing!" and to the command "Do not steal." But none of these expressions have any cognitive meaning, for they express not truth but emotions. They are not value claims but psychological claims

The way in which the emotivism theory of morality follows from a preconceived theory of knowledge has been represented as follows:

"As positivists, these writers held every judgment belongs to one or other of two types. On the one hand, it may be a priori or necessary. But then it is always analytic, i.e., it unpacks in its predicate part or all of its subject. Can we safely say that 7 + 5 makes 12? Yes, because 12 is what we mean by "7 + 5." On the other hand, the judgment may be empirical, and then, if we are to verify it, we can no longer look to our meanings only; it refers to sense experience and there we must look for its warrant. Having arrived at this division of judgments, the positivists raised the question where value judgments fall. The judgment that knowledge is good, for example, did not seem to be analytic; the value that knowledge might have did not seem to be part of our concept of knowledge. But neither was the statement empirical, for goodness was not

a quality like red or squeaky that could be seen or heard. What were they to do, then, with these awkward judgments of value? To find a place for them in their theory of knowledge would require them to revise the theory radically, and yet that theory was what they regarded as their most important discovery. It appeared that the theory could be saved in one way only. If it could be shown that judgments of good and bad were not judgments at all, that they asserted nothing true or false, but merely expressed emotions like "Hurrah" or "Fiddlesticks," then these wayward judgments would cease from troubling and weary heads could be at rest. This is the course the positivists took. They explained value judgments by explaining them away."

True to the above characterization A.J. Ayer, the arch-representative of logical positivism, presents hisown case thus.

> *". , . it is our business to give an account of "judgments of value" which is both satisfactory in itself and consistent with our general empiricist principles. We shall set ourselves to show that in so far as statements of value are significant, they are ordinary "scientific" statements; and that in so far as they are not scientific, they are not in the literal sense significant but are simply expressions of emotion which can be neither true nor false. . . .*

.....We begin by admitting that the fundamental ethical concepts are unanalyzable, inasmuch as there is no criterion by which one can test the validity of the judgments in which they occur. So far we are in agreement with the absolutists. But, unlike the absolutists, we are able to give an explanation of this fact about ethical concepts. We say that the reason why they are unanalyzable is that they are mere pseudo-concepts. The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus if I say to someone, "You acted wrongly in stealing that money," I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, "You stole that money." In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, "You stole that money," in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. The tone, or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence. It merely serves to show that the expression of it is attended by certain feelings in the speaker.

If now I generalise my previous statement and say, "Stealing money is wrong," I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning—that is, expresses no proposition which can be either true or false. It is as if I had written "Stealing money!!" where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is the feeling which is being expressed. It is clear that there is nothing said here which can be true or false. Another man may disagree with me about the wrongness of stealing, in the sense that he may not have the same feelings about stealing as I have, and he may quarrel with me on account of my moral sentiments. But he cannot, strictly speaking, contradict me. For in saying that a certain type of action, is right or wrong, I am not making any factual statement, not even a statement about my own state of mind. I am merely expressing certain moral sentiments. And the man who is ostensibly contradicting me is merely expressing his moral sentiments. So that there

is plainly no sense in asking which of us is in the right. For neither of us is asserting a genuine proposition.

What we have just been, saying about the symbol "wrong" applies to all normative ethical symbols. Sometimes they occur in sentences which record ordinary empirical facts besides ex pressing ethical feeling about those facts: sometimes they occur in sentences which simply express ethical feeling about a certain type of action, or situation, without making any statement of fact. But in every case in which one would commonly be said to be making an ethical judgment, the function of the relevant ethical word is purely emotive." It is used to express feeling about certain objects, but not to make assertion about them.

It is worth mentioning that ethical terms do not serve only to express feeling- They are calculated also to arouse feeling, and so to stimulate action. Indeed some of them are used in such a way as to give the sentences in which they occur the effect of commands. Thus the sentence 'It is your duty to tell the truth" may be regarded both as the expression of a certain sort of ethical feeling about truthfulness and as theexpression of the command "Tell the truth." The sentence "You ought to tell the truth" also involves the command ' Tell the truth," but here the tone of the command is less emphatic. In the sentence "It's good to tell the truth" the command has become little more than a suggestion. And thus the "meaning" of the word "good," in its ethical usage, is differentiated from that of the word "duty" or the word "ought." In fact we may define the meaning of the various ethical words in terms both of the different feelings they are ordinarily taken to express, and also the different responses which they are calculated to provoke.

We can now see why it is impossible to find a criterion for determining the validity of ethical judgments. It is not because they have an "absolute" validity which is mysteriously independent of ordinary sense-experience, but because they have no objective validity whatsoever. If a sentence makes no statement at all, there is obviously no sense in asking whether what it says is true or false. And we have seen that sentences which simply express moral judgments do not say anything. They are pure expressions of feeling and as such do not come under the category of truth and falsehood. They are unverifiable for the same reason as a cry of pain or a word of command is unverifiable—because they do not express genuine propositions.

.... the main objection to the ordinary subjectivist theory is that the validity of ethical judgments is not determined by the nature of their author's feelings. And this is an objection which our theory escapes. For it does not imply that the existence of any feelings is a necessary and sufficient condition of the validity of an ethical judgment. It implies, on the contrary, that ethical judgments have no validity."

EMOTIVISM

The view, usually associated with logical positivism, that moral propositions make no claims about reality but, rather, merely express the likes and dislikes of the speaker.

What do you make of this view of morality? First, some rather theoretical considerations. Obviously, as with the logical positivist rejection of metaphysical claims, its rejection of moral clams depends on the Verification Principle, but the Verification Principle must reckon with several lines of objection: Does it rather arbitrarily exalt the language of sense experience as the language? Is it insensitive to other and equally important spheres of discourse with their own and different criteria of meaningfulness? Is it not meaningless on its own showing, since it claims to be nonanalytic but cannot be verified empirically? And are you satisfied with its bifurcation of meaningful knowledge into either analytic a priori or synthetic a posteriori? *And do you accept its repudiation of synthetic* a priori *knowledge, and can you live with the epistemological consequences of this repudiation?*

On the more practical side, even if emotivism could work as a *theory* about moral propositions, can it work in *practice?* What becomes of the practical necessity of legislation, praise and blame, and moral disputes? More specifically, consider these odd implications of emotivism. If emotivism were true, then no one could be mistaken in matters of morality, for, in the first place, moral judgments would not be abouttruth, and, in the second place, a person's feelings and attitudes would be just whatever theyare, and that is that. Closely related to this is the awkward consequence that something approved by an insane person might for that reason alone be good: Imagine a murder wherein the victim was dispatched so immediately as to have no time to formulate his own disapproval, and the crime so perfectly executed that no others beside the murderer should ever know it. The only attitude or feeling about the murder would be the murderer's own. And his feeling about it would be: "I like it!" The murder was therefore "good." Finally, what becomes of occurrences which happened before anyone registered approval or disapproval? Were they not good, or bad already, then, when they occurred? In a word: At the practical level, is anything really important resolved with the view that "X is bad" means simply "X —ugh!"?

5.2- THE CHALLENGE OF RELATIVISM

The idea of ethical relativism is first encountered in the person of Protagoras. In fact, he provided this view with a motto for all time when he said that “a man is the measure of all things.” Though Protagoras himself did not limit his statement to moral claims, it was natural that it was in the realm of morality that it was most obviously applied.

Ethical relativism holds, unlike emotivism, that moral claims are cognitively meaningful, that is, true or false, and that the criterion of their truth or falsity is the individual- the individual's perceptions, opinions, experiences, inclinations, and desires. This sort of relativism can take different forms, depending on what is meant by "individual." It might make ethical truth relative to the individual person, or the individual society, or community, or nation, or culture, or even the whole human race. But any form of ethical relativism denies that there are common or universal or objective moral values. It insists, rather, that moral values are private, individual, or subjective. Hence, ethical relativism vs. ethical absolutism may be expressed also as ethical subjectivism vs. ethical objectivism. However it is expressed, the issue is the same: What is the source or foundation of moral values and ideals? Are ethical values relative and subjective, or absolute and objective? Are they dependent upon the individual, or do moral values and ideals exist irrespective and independent of the individual? Is morality a matter of "different strokes for different folks"?

Ethical Relativism

Ethical relativism, or ethical subjectivism, denies any absolute or objective moral values which are common to all, and affirms, rather that the individual (a person, community, society, etc.) is the source and criterion of moral judgments.

For those who embrace ethical relativism, more often than not it is the particular or individualculture that is said to define morality. An instance of this can be encountered in B. F. Skinner*Beyond Freedom and Dignity:*

"What a given group of people calls good is a fact: it is what members of the group find reinforcing as the result of their genetic endowment and the natural and social contingencies to which they have been exposed. Each culture has its own set of goods, and what is good in one culture may not be good in another. To recognize this is to take the position of "cultural relativism." What is good for the Trobriand Islander is good for the Trobriand Islander, and that is that. Anthropologists have often emphasized relativism as a tolerant alternative to missionary zeal *in* converting all cultures to a single set of ethical, governmental, religious, or economic values."

One such anthropologist was Ruth Benedict, author of the much-read Patterns of Culture. *In her essay, "Anthropology and the Abnormal," she, like Skinner, equates cultural relativism and ethical relativism:*

"Every society, *beginning with some* slight inclination in one direction or another, carries its preference farther and farther, integrating itself more and more completely upon its chosen basis, and discarding those types of behavior that are uncongenial. Most of those organizations of personality that seem to us most incontrovertibly abnormal have been looked on in differently

organized cultures as aberrant. Normality, *in* short, within a-very wide range, is culturally defined. It is primarily a term for the socially elaborated segment of human' behavior in any culture; and abnormality, a term for the segment that that particular civilization does not use. The very eyes with which we see the problem are conditioned by the long traditional habits of our own society.

It is a point that has been made more often in relation to ethics than *in relation to* psychiatry. We do not any longer make the mistake of deriving the morality of our own locality and decade directly from the inevitable constitution of human nature. We do not elevate it to the dignity of a first principle. We recognize that morality differs in every society, and is a convenient term for socially approved habits. Mankind has always preferred to say, "It is a morally good," rather than "It is habitual,'' and the fact of this preference is matter *enough* for a critical science of ethics: But historically the two phrases are synonymous.

The concept of the normal is properly a variant of the concept of the good. It is that which society has approved. A normal action is one which falls well within the limits of expected behavior for a particular society. Its variability among different peoples is essentially a function of the variability of the behavior patterns that different societies have created for themselves, and can never be wholly divorced from a consideration of culturally institutionalized types of behavior.

Each culture is a more or less elaborate working-out of the potentialities of the segment it has chosen. In so far as a civilization is well integrated and consistent within itself, it will tend to carry farther and farther, according to its nature, its initial impulse toward a particular type of action, and from the point of view of any other culture those elaborations will include more and more extreme and aberrant traits.

Each of these traits, in proportion as it reinforces the chosen behavior patterns of that culture, is for that culture normal. Those individuals to whom it is congenial either congenitally, or as the result of childhood sets, are accorded prestige in that culture, and are not visited with the social contempt or disapproval which their traits would call down upon them in *a society that was differently organized.* On *the other hand, those individuals whose characteristics are not congenial to the selected type of human behavior m that community are the deviants, no matter how valued their personality traits may be in a contrasted civilization."*

Why would one be an ethical relativist? Why would one ever assert with Protagoras that in matters of morality, "a man is the measure of all things"? Well, there is one gigantic but two-sided argument that relativists give over and over again. And, in fact, it is the argument that Protagoras himself gave; the argument is, first, that ethical views, opinions, and exhortations are largely or even completely conditioned by our circumstances. Obviously, whether you think that X is right and Y is wrong is very much dependent upon—relative to—when and where you were born, your upbringing, your education, your religious instruction, and maybe even your skin

color and your height Do you really think that you would hold the same moral opinions if your fundamental circumstances had been radically different? Second, and aside from our circumstances, relativists usually take very seriously the differences, disputes, and downright confusion that reign everywhere in the area of morality.

When both of these lines of observations are put together they suggest strongly (maybe decisively) to some that thereare no common or universal or objective values, and that morality is relative.

Such a position is not without its problems. For one thing, does not the argument for ethical relativism misfire? Surely it does not follow from the fact that one's moral opinions are conditioned or learned that they are therefore merely subjectively or relatively true. We have learned all sorts of things which, nonetheless, we believe to be true, and true for everyone: *In fourteen-hundred-and-ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue; 2 +2 = 4; it is wrong to beat your spouse, starve your children, and torture your pets: etc. And how do disagreements about morality destroy its objectivity? We mav disagree also about the nature of the universe, but we would hardly conclude from that that the universe* has *no nature! On the contrary, what is the point of disagreeing at all, unless we believe there is some real* truth *involved? It is important, then, to distinguish between our* opinions *of morality and* morality itself. *Certainly our opinions about morality differ, and certainly they are conditioned by and relative to all sorts of things. But in no other sphere would we so simple-mindedly confuse our opinions of the truth with the truth itself. Why here, where the implications are far more consequential?*

More specifically, it may be observed that ethical relativism not only misfiresbutbackfires inasmuch as it involves some curious self-contradictions. For example,and recalling our earlier discussion of self-refuting propositions, it claims that thereis no objective moral truth, but at the same time insists that that claim itself ought *to be accepted. Or what about the subjectivist who meets an objectivist? Would not the subjectivist have to say that the objectivism's opinion is true —in which case the subjectivist's opinion must be false?*

*Just such problems as these are what Plato hoped to convey in his own refutation of Protagoras' principle of "a man is the measure." The*Theaetetus *is the dialogue, and again, Socrates is the mouth piece.*

"socrates: . . . what is the consequence for Protagoras himself? Is it not this? Supposing that not even he believed in man being the measure and the world in general did not believe it either—as in fact it doesn't—then this Truth which he wrote would not be true for anyone. If, on the other hand, he did believe it, but the mass of mankind does not agree with him, then, you see, it is more false than true by just so much as the unbelievers outnumber the believers.

THEODORUS: That follows, if its truth or falsity varies with each individual opinion.

socrates: Yes, and besides that it involves a really exquisite conclusion. Protagoras, for his part, admitting as he does that everybody's opinion is true, must acknowledge the truth of his opponents' belief about his own belief, where they think he is wrong.

THEODORUS: Certainly.

socrates: That is to say, he would acknowledge his own belief to be false, if he admits that the belief of those who think him wrong is true?

THEODORUS: Necessarily.

socrates: But the others, on their side, do not admit to themselves that they are wrong.

THEODORUS: No.

Socrates: Whereas Protagoras, once more, according to what he has written, admits, that this opinion of theirs is as true as any other.

THEODORUS: Evidently.

socrates: On all hands, then, Protagoras included, his opinion will be disputed, or rather Protagoras will join in the general consent—when he admits to an opponent the truth of his contrary opinion, from that moment Protagoras himself will be admitting that a dog or the man in the street is not a measure of anything whatever that he does not understand. Isn't that so?

THEODORUS: Yes.

socrates: Then, since it is disputed by everyone, the Truth of Protagoras is true to nobody—to himself no more than to anyone else."

Furthermore, and similar to a criticism leveled against emotivism, if the individual is the basis of moral truth, then none of us could ever be mistaken in our moral opinions, for whatever we believe must be true. Or, on the larger interpretation of "individual," such as an individual group, morality would reduce to what happened to be believed by the largest number of people. Both of these seem to many to be necessary but absurd implications of the relativist or subjectivist position.

Some have even charged that ethical relativism involves a bigger contradiction than those already mentioned. It involves a sort ofpracticalcontradiction.Itis the contradiction between saying one thing and living another. You may know someone whoclaims to be an ethical relativist, but do you know anyone wholivesas one? Do we not all, in one way or another, impose our ideas of morality on others? Do we not hold others responsible for their actions? Do we not judge others as morally wrong or reprehensible? Do we not vote, crusade for causes, and make sacrifices for various ideals? But clearly all such actions are meaningful (here,existentially

meaningful) only on the assumption of an objective *and common morality. In a word, this objection charges that there is really no such thing as a consistent subjectivist.*

It should be noted, finally, thatif, unlike the emotivists, you believe that moral propositions are cognitively significant, that is, that they are either true or false, and ifyou accept the above criticisms of ethical relativism, then you *must* be an ethical objectivist or absolutist. For either ethical relativism is true or ethical absolutism is true; there is no third alternative. If ethical relativism is false, then ethical absolutism must be true. Or, at least, so it seems to many. How does it seem to you?

Ethical absolutism

Ethical absolutism, or ethical objectivism, affirms that moral values are independent of individual opinions, and ascribes to them an abiding and fixed reality common to all.

5.3- THE CHALLENGE OF EXISTENTIALISM

It is difficult to say just what existentialism is, because the existentialists are so varied in their points of view. But that they represent, in different ways, challenges to traditional morality is evident.

For example, the Danish philosopher Saren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) taught the "'teleological suspension of the ethical," according to which the individual is enabled to transcend ordinary ethical norms and receive his or her commandments immediately from God. The German Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) rejected Christianity as involving a "slave-morality" and called for a "transvaluation of values" according to which "the will to power" as the basic principle of life will lead to the development of a higher type of humanity. Surely the best-known existentialist is the contemporary French writer and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. In addition to authoring works with ponderous titles such as Being *and Nothingness,* he wrote an essay entitled, simply, "Existentialism." This little work is often regarded as the best introduction to the philosophy of existentialism, and certainly it represents yet another existentialist's challenge to traditional morality.

According to Sartre, existentialism turns on its head any philosophy (think especially of Plato) which teaches that everything is what it is by virtue of a transcendent essence: Essence precedes existence. No, says Sartre. We begin with the individual, the concretely existing human being, the subject. The central tenet of existentialism, in any of its forms, is that existence precedes essence. What is first given is the existence of a particular thing; only after that does its essence appear. Or, to say it another way,subjectivity mustbethe starting point. However, in its atheistic form, which Sartre himself espouses, existentialism finds nothing outside, above, or beyond the

individual to which the individual can leap for its essence, definition, or meaning. God is dead, all objective and transcendent values have disappeared with him, and the individual is alone. "condemned to This is the meaning of Sartre's famous pronouncement that we are "condemned to be free." Here, to be "free" means to be unconditioned by any moral law or eternal values.

What then do we do? Answer: we must accept the full burden of our freedom, and through our choices and commitments contribute to the evolving essence of humanity. What we choose for ourselves, that we become. And what we become, that we contribute to the definition or essence of humanity, for each of us is part of humanity. If, then, we care about the essence of humanity—what it is and will become—we must have a care about our own individual commitments. This aloneness and personal responsibility is the source of the emphasis by Sartre and other existentialists on the anxiety, dread, and despair of the "conscious" individual, the individual who knows the score.

You may be tempted to see another version of subjectivism, but there is a difference. In its crassest form, subjectivism denies that any value or ideal is any better than another. Clearly Sartre is not saying this. It is true that there is no divine or transcendent foundation of values, and that is precisely why Sartre shifts the responsibility to individuals. Human beings in their freedom (in Sartre's existentialist sense) are themselves the basis of values, and in this sense values are real—evolving, developing, on the move, butreal. In place of God or a transcendent source of values, ideals, meaning, etc., this philosophy is trulyhumanistic, in that humanity stands center-stage as the criterion of all meaning and value. It is important to see how this differs from the sort of relativism or subjectivism we considered in the previous section. That philosophy denied any objective or common values, locating them instead in individuals. This philosophy, on the other hand, affirms objective values, but locates them inhumanity. The difference between subjectivism and humanism is caught by the two claims,

- A man is the measure of all things.
- Man is the, measure of all things.

HUMANISM

As is evident from the word **itself,** humanism is the exaltation of humanity as the source and criterion of all value and meaning.

In the following, from his essay "Existentialism," Sartre explains the general nature of this philosophy, and the moral implications of his version of it.

“What is meant by the term "existentialism?"

Most people who use the word would be rather embarrassed if they had to explain *it*, since, now that the *word* is all the rage, even the work of a musician or painter is being called existentialist. *A* gossip columnist in*Clartes* signs himself *The Existentialist, 'so* that by this *time the* word has been so stretched and has taken on so broad a meaning, that it no longer means anything at all. It seems that for want of an avant-garde doctrine analogous to surrealism, the kind of people who are eager for scandal and flurry *turn to this* philosophy which in other respects does *not* at all serve their purposes in this sphere.

Actually, it is the least scandalous, the *most* austere of doctrines. It is intended strictly for specialists and philosophers. Yet it can be defined easily. What complicates matters is that there are two kinds of existentialist; first, those who are Christian, among whom I would include Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both Catholic; and *on* the other hand the atheistic existentialists, whom I class Heidegger, and then the French existentialists and myself. What they have in common is that they think that existence precedes essence, or, if you prefer, that subjectivity must be the starting point.

Just what does that mean? Let us consider some object that is manufactured, for example, a book or a paper-cutter: here is an object which has been made by an artisan whose inspiration came from a concept. He referred to the concept of what a paper-cutter is and likewise to a known method of production, which is part of the concept, something which is; by and large, a routine. Thus, the paper-cutter is at once an object produced in a certain way and, on the other hand, one having a specific use; and one cannot postulate a man who produces a paper-cutter but does not know what it is used for. Therefore, let us say that, for the paper-cutter, essence- that is, the ensemble of both the production routines and the properties which enable it to be both produced and defined- precedes existence. Thus, the presence of the paper-cutter or book in front of me is determined. Therefore, we have here a technical view of the world whereby it can be said that production precedes existence.

When we conceived God as the Creator, He is generally thought of as a superior sort of artisan. Whatever doctrine we may be considering, whether one like that of Descartes or that of Leibnitz, we always grant that will more or less follows understanding or, at the very least, accompanies it, and that when God creates He knows exactly what He is creating. Thus, the concept of man in the mind of God is comparable to the concept of paper-cutter in the mind of the manufacturer, and, following certain techniques and a conception, God produces man, just as the artisan, following a definition and a technique, makes a paper-cutter. Thus, the individual man is the realization of a certain concept in the divine intelligence.

In the eighteenth century, the atheism of the philosophes discarded the idea of God, but not so much for the notion that essence precedes existence. To a certain extent, this idea is found everywhere; we find it in Diderot, in Voltaire, and even in Kant. Man has a human nature; this human nature, which is the concept of the human, is found in all men, which means that each man is a particular example of a universal concept, man. In Kant, the result of this universality is

that the Wildman, the natural man, as well as the bourgeois, are circumscribed by the same definition and have the same basic qualities. Thus, here too the essence of man precedes the historical existence that we find in nature.

Atheistic existentialism, which I represent, is more coherent. It states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that this being is man, or, as Heidegger says, human reality. What is meant here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is *indefinable,* it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after this thrust toward existence.

Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism. It is also what is called subjectivity, the name we are labeled with when charges are brought against us. But what do we mean by this, if not that man has a greater dignity than a *stone or* table? For we mean that man first exists, that is, that man first of all is the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. Man is at the start a plan which is aware of itself, rather than a patch of moss, a piece of garbage, or a cauliflower; nothing exists prior to this plan; there is nothing in heaven; man will be what he will have planned to be. Not what he will want to be. Because by the word "will" we generally mean a conscious decision, which is subsequent to what we have already made of ourselves. I may want to belong to a political party, write a book, get married; but all that is only a manifestation of an earlier, more spontaneous choice that is called "will." But if existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every *man* aware of what he *is* and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him. And when we say that a man is responsible for himself, we do not only *mean* that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.

The word subjectivism has two meanings, and our opponents play on the two. Subjectivism means, on the one hand, that an individual chooses and makes himself; and, on the other, that it is impossible for man to transcend human subjectivity. The second of these is the essential meaning of existentialism. When we say that man chooses his own self, we *mean* that every one of us does likewise; but we also mean by that that in making this choice he also chooses all men. In fact, in creating the man that we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be. To choose to be this or that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all.

If, on the other hand, existence precedes essence, and if we grant that we exist and fashion our image at one and the same time, the image is valid for everybody and for our whole age. Thus,

our responsibility is much greater than we might have supposed, because it involves all mankind. If I am a workingman and choose to join a Christian trade-union rather than be a communist, and if by being a member I want to show that the best thing for man is resignation, that the kingdom of man is not of this world, I am not only involving my *own* case—I want to be resigned for everyone. As a result, my action has involved all humanity. To take a more individual matter, if I want to marry, to have children; even if this marriage depends solely on my own circumstances or passion or wish, I am involving all humanity *in monogamy* and not merely myself. Therefore, I am responsible for myself and for everyone else. I am creating a certain image of man of my *own* choosing. *In* choosing myself, I choose man.

This helps us understand what the actual content is of such rather grandiloquent words as anguish, forlornness, despair. As you will see, it's all quite simple. . . .

When we speak of forlornness, a term Heidegger was fond of, we mean only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of *this.* The existentialist is strongly opposed to a certain kind of secular ethics which would like to abolish God with the least possible expense. About 1880, some French teachers tried to set up a secular ethics which went something like this: God is a useless and costly hypothesis; we are discarding it; but, meanwhile, in order for there to be an ethics, a society, a civilization, it is essential that certain values be taken seriously and that they be considered as having an *a priori* existence. It must be obligatory, *a priori, to* be honest, not to lie, not to beat your wife, to have children, etc., etc. So we're *going to* try a little device which will make it possible to show what values exist all the same, inscribed in a heaven of ideas, though otherwise God does *not* exist. In other words—and this, I believe, is the tendency of everything called reformism in France—nothing will be changed if God does not exist. We shall find ourselves with the same norms of honesty, progress, and humanism, and we shall have made of God an outdated hypothesis which will peacefully die off by itself.

The existentialist, on the contrary, thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas-disappears along with Him; there can no longer be an a *priori* Good, since there is no infinite and perfect *consciousness to* think it. Nowhere is it written that the Good exists, that we must be *Honest,* that we must not lie; because the fact *is* we are *on* a plane where there are only *men.* Dostoyevsky said, "If God didn't exist, everything would be possible." That is the very *starting point* of existentialism. Indeed, everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. He can't start making excuses for himself.

If existence really does precede essence, there*is no* explaining things away by reference to a fixed and *given* human nature. In other words, there is no determinism, man is free, man is freedom. *On* the other hand, if God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So, in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before *us.* We are alone, with no excuses.

That *is* the idea I shall try to convey when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did *not* create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because, once thrown *into the* world, he is responsible for everything he does."

We have already distinguished Sartre's humanistic existentialism from subjectivism. Nonetheless, Sartre's position has been attacked with criticisms similar to those which we saw in the previous section leveled against subjectivism. After all, if individual existence precedes the essence of humanity, and nothing at all precedes or conditions the individual's choices, then what is to prevent those choices from being purely arbitrary and, thus, the evolving essence of man as well? That is, if you don't begin with any meaning, how can you end with any?

This is the point of one of Sartre's loudest critics, Gabriel Marcel (1889- 1973), whom Sartre mentioned as a Christian existentialist in the above selection. (That Marcel is called an existentialist by Sartre himself, and yet attacked the very basis of Sartre's philosophy, reminds us of what a variety there is among existentialists.) Marcel represents the way in which one might be faithful to the existentialist thesis that subjectivity must be the starting point but, beginning with subjectivity or the concreteness of personal existence, might move to a theistic or transcendent basis of value and meaning. This, says Marcel, is exactly what we must do, for values are not chosen but *discovered.* They are *given.* They areobjective. According to Marcel, the Sartrean approach bogs down in a hopeless contradiction: It claims that outside our own commitments there is no basis for moral choices, but then turns right around and insists that some choices are better than others. You cannot have it both ways, and you cannot give up (can you?) the view that some choices are better than others. We must, says Marcel, grant the *g*ivennessof values and meaning. And given by whom, except *God?* From Marcel's*The*Philosophy *of Existentialism:*

"From [Sartre's] standpoint, values cannot be anything but the result of the initial choice made by each human being; in other words, they can never be "recognized" or "discovered." "My freedom," he states expressly, "is the unique foundation of values. And since I am the being by virtue of whom values exist, nothing—absolutely nothing—can justify me in adopting this or that value or scale of values. As the unique basis of the existence of values, 1 am totally unjustifiable. And my freedom is in anguish at finding that it is the baseless basis of values." Nothing could be more explicit; but the question is whether Sartre does not here go counter to the exigencies of that human reality which he claims, after all, not to invent but to reveal.

Not to deal exclusively in abstractions, let us take a concrete case. Sartre has announced that the third volume of his Les Chemins de la Liberte (the Ways of Freedom) is to be devoted to the praise of the heroes of Resistance. Now I ask you in the name of what principle, having first denied the existence of values or at least of their objective basis, can he establish any appreciable difference between those utterly misguided but undoubtedly courageous men who joined voluntarily the Anti-Bolshevik Legion, on the one hand, and the heroes of the Resistance movement, on the other? I can see no way of establishing this difference without admitting that

causes have their intrinsic value and, consequently, that values are real. I have no doubt that Sartre's ingenuity will find a way out of this dilemma; in fact, he quite often uses the words "good" and "bad," but what can these words possibly mean in the context of his philosophy?

The truth is that, if I examine myself honestly and without reference to any preconceived body of ideas, I find that I do not "choose" my values at all, but that I recognize them and then posit my actions in accordance or in contradiction with these values, not, however, without being painfully aware of this contradiction. . . It should perhaps be asked at this point if it is not Nietzsche who, with his theory of the creation of values, is responsible for the deathly principle-of error which has crept into speculation on this subject. But although I am the last to underrate the objections to Nietzsche's doctrine, I am inclined to think that his view is less untenable than that of Sartre, for it escapes that depth of rationalism and materialism which is discernible, to me as to others, in the mind of the author ofL'Etre et le Neant [Being and Nothingness].

I would suggest in conclusion that existentialism stands today at a parting of the ways: it is, in the last analysis, obliged either to deny or to transcend itself. It denies itself quite simply when it falls to the level of infra-dialectical materialism. It transcends itself, or it tends to transcend itself, when it opens itself out to the experience of the superhuman, an experience which can hardly be ours in a genuine and lasting way this side of death, but of which the reality is attested by mystics, and of which the possibility is warranted by any philosophy which refuses to be immured in the postulate of absolute immanence or to subscribe in advance to the denial of the beyond and of the unique and veritable transcendence."

5.4-THE CHALLENGE OF DETERMINISM

Another difficulty for morality is posed by the determinist. In fact, some would say that determinism renders morality (as most of us understand the word) impossible; determinism is the view that all things are causally conditioned such that they could not be otherwise.

But what are the moral implications of determinism? Well, if it is true that all things are causally determined, then this must apply also to our willing and choosing. And this means the denial of .free will. *And* this *means the*end of morality. *At least according to many. For is it not clear, they would insist, that morality*presupposes free will?*that*ought*implies*can*? What sense is there in praise and blame and talk of moral responsibility if one could not have done otherwise? if one does not choose and act freely? Is it not always relevant, when trying to establish blame or guilt or responsibility on the part of someone, to ascertain whether that person was forced, drugged, or suffering from some compulsion? Thus free will has seemed to many to be a condition for responsible, moral action.*

Your decision between determinism, or the belief that everything, including your will, is causally determined, and indeterminism, the belief that some things, and therefore possibly the will, are not determined, may be a crucial one. And you cannot have it both ways. Either determinism or indeterminism.

But we must not move too fast here. Determinism itself must be viewed in two lights. hard-determinism and soft-determinism.

The hard-determinist believes not only that all things are determined, but that they are determined ultimately by purely external factors, factors outside yourself and over which you have no control. Why did you choose X?Ultimately*hard-determinism because of things like the circumstances of your birth, upbringing, education, environment, genetic structure —in a word because of everything that has contributed in any way to the shaping and placing of your person and those of all of your ancestors. To say it another way, you chose X because ----------: Fill in here the uncountable causes which, extending as it were from the infinite past, converge at this moment on the movement of your will in favor of X.*

Is hard-determinism compatible with morality? According to the hard-determinists themselves, the answer is both Yes and No. On the yes-side, the hard-determinist, no less than anyone else, decries murder, theft, and the torturing of starving children. The fact that people have no control over their actions, whether good or evil, has no bearing on those actions being, nevertheless, good or evil. The desire to torture starving children, like cancer, is an evil to be recognized as such and to be dealt with—as you would deal with cancer. Now you do not punish a cancer; you try totreatit andheal it. (Echoes of Skinner?) But this brings us to the no side of the answer. If morality implies the possibility of praise, blame, and punishment, then the hard-determinist can scarcely accommodate morality. Certainly there is little room for praise, blame, and punishment in a view of things according to which no one is responsible for his or her condition in general, which means also his or her moral condition in specific. One is notresponsible, period.

It is precisely to the issue ofresponsibilitythat soft determinism speaks. Thesoft-determinist is, of course, a determinist, and holds, like the hard-determinist, that because of antecedent causes our choices could not be otherwise. But in contrast to the hard-determinist, the soft-determinist shifts our whole attention to the causes which lie within *the individual. Our actions and choices* are *determined— by our desires, inclinations, attitudes, or, in a word, our* character.

In this way, the soft-determinists see determinism not only as compatible with morality but as necessary for morality. For, they say your choices or actions can be judged moral or immoral, or you can be held accountable for them, only if they actually reflect your intentions, desires, attitudes, and so on. Would you hold someone responsible for an action that did not really spring from his or her character? Would you hold me morally accountable for hitting you in the face if it was the result of a sudden and uncontrollable muscle spasm? If, however, my hitting you in the face was the result of (or wascaused by*)* my attitude toward you and my intention to cause you pain, well, isn't that a quite different situation? a situation in which I amresponsiblefor my action? amoral situation? How then can there be moral behavior and moral judgment without determinism—character-determinism or self-determinism, as the position is also called?

David Hume provides a good statement of how praise and blame are possible only if the deeds that are praised or blamed are rooted in, or *caused* by, the doer's character. From the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding:*

"The only proper object of hatred or vengeance is a person or creature, endowed with thought and consciousness; and when any criminal or injurious actions excite that passion, it is only by their relation to the person, or connection with him. Actions *are, by their very nature, temporary and perishing; and where they proceed not from* some cause in *the* character *and disposition of the person who performed them, they can neither redound to his honour, if good: nor infamy,if evil. The actions themselves may be blameable; they may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion: But the person is not answerable for them; and as they proceeded from nothing in him that is durable and constant, and leave nothing of that nature behind them, it is impossible he can, upon their account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. According to the principle, therefore, which denies necessity, and consequently causes, a man is as pure and untainted, after having committed the most horrid crime, as at the first moment of his birth, nor is his character anywise concerned in his actions, since they are not derived from it, and the wickedness of the one can never be used as a proof of the depravity of the other.*

Men are not blamed for such actions as they perform ignorantly and casually, whatever may be the consequences. Why?but because the principles of these actions are only momentary, and terminate in them alone. Men are less blamed for such actions as they perform hastily and unpremeditatedly than for such as proceed from deliberation. For what reason?but because a hasty temper, though a constant cause or principle in the mind, operates only by intervals, and infects not the whole character. Again, repentance wipes off every crime, if attended with a reformation of life and manners. How is this to be accounted for? but by asserting that actions render *a person criminal merely as they are proofs of criminal principles in the mind; and when, by an alteration of these principles, they cease to be just proofs, they likewise cease to be criminal. But, except upon the doctrine of necessity, they never were just proofs, and consequently never were criminal.*

It will be equally easy to prove, and from the same arguments, that liberty ... is *also essential to morality, and that no human actions, where it is wanting, are susceptible of any moral qualities,* or can *be the objects either of approbation or dislike. For as actions are objects* of our moral *sentiment,* so *far only as they are indications of the internal character,* passions, *and affections; it is impossible that they can give rise either to praise or blame, where they proceed not from these principles, but are derived altogether from external violence."*

But the indeterminists, or free-willists, are still unsatisfied. They raise an obvious question: It may be that my choice or action is determined by my own character, but how did I acquire this character—these particular attitudes, inclinations, desires, likes, and dislikes? Is not my character ultimately determined, again, by factors outside me, antecedent to me, and quite beyond my control? Does not soft-determinism have to give way, finally, to hard-determinism with its denial

of moral responsibility? As far asresponsibility goes, is there really any final difference between soft- and hard-determinism? A clearer reduction of soft-determinism to hard-determinism could hardly be found than that of Baron D'Holbach (1723- 1789), an atheistic and mechanistic materialist. In the following, from *The System of* Nature,Holbach applies his mechanistic principle specifically to the question of morality, and concludes that all of our moral dispositions, no less than anything else about us, reduce, finally, to necessary determinations.

"The ambitious man cries out: you will have me resist my passion; but have they not unceasingly repeated to me that rank, honours, power, are the most desirable advantages in life? Have I not seen my fellow citizens envy them, the nobles of my country sacrifice everything to obtain them? In the society in which I live, am I not obliged to feel, that if I am deprived of these advantages, I must expect to languish in contempt; to cringe under the rod of oppression?

The miser says: you forbid me to love money, to seek after the means of acquiring it: alas! does not everything tell me that, in this world, money is the greatest blessing; that it is amply sufficient to render me happy? In the country I inhabit, do I not see all my fellow citizens covetous of riches? but do I not also witness that they are little scrupulous in the means of obtaining wealth? As soon as they are enriched by the means which you censure, are they not cherished, considered and respected? By what authority, then, do you defend me from amassing treasure? What right have you to prevent my using means, which, although you call them sordid and criminal, I see approved by the sovereign? Will you have me renounce my happiness?

The voluptuary argues: you pretend that I should resist my desires; but was I the maker of my own temperament, which unceasingly invites me to pleasure? You call my pleasures disgraceful; but in the country in which I live, do I not witness the most dissipated men enjoying the most distinguished rank? Do I not behold that no one is ashamed of adultery but the husband it has outraged? Do not I see men making trophies of their debaucheries, boasting of their libertinism, rewarded with applause?

The choleric man vociferates: you advise me to put a curb on my passions, and to resist the desire of avenging myself: but can I conquer my nature? Can I alter the received opinions of the world? Shall I not be forever disgraced, infallibly dishonoured in society, if I do not wash out in the blood of my fellow creatures the injuries I have received?

The zealous enthusiast exclaims: you recommend me mildness; you advise me to be tolerant; to be indulgent to the opinions of my fellow men; but is not my temperament violent? Do I not ardently love my God? Do they not assure me, that zeal is pleasing to him; that sanguinary inhuman persecutors have been his friends? As I wish to render myself acceptable in his sight, I therefore adopt the same means.

In short, the actions of man are never free; they are always the necessary consequence of his temperament, of the received ideas, and of the notions, either true or false, which he has formed

to himself of happiness; of his opinions, strengthened by example, by education, and by daily experience.. . .

If he understood the play of his organs, if he were able to recall to himself all the impulsions they have received, all the modifications they have undergone, all the effects they have produced, he would perceive that all his actions are submitted to that fatality, which regulates his own particular system, as it does the entire system of the universe: no one effect in him, any more than in nature, produces itself by chance; this, as has been before proved, is word void of sense. All that passes in him; all that is done by him; as well as all that happens in nature, or that is attributed to her, is derived from necessary causes, which act according to necessary laws, and which produce necessary effects, from whence necessarily flow others.

Fatality, is the eternal, the immutable, the necessary order, established in nature; or the indispensable connection of causes that act, with the effects they operate."

The indeterminist agrees with this but draws the opposite conclusion: not that there is no basis for praise, blame, responsibility, and virtuous conduct, but that determinism must be false! That is, the indeterminist can simply turn the tables: If someone says that since our wills are determined there can be no morality, the indeterminist may answer that inasmuch as morality is a fact our wills must not be determined! And, of course, the indeterminists have it in their favor that, as a matter of fact, we do—all of us, always, and unavoidably—live our lives on the assumption that there is free will and that people are responsible. Thus, according to the indeterminists, the determinists are a little like the relativists, who, as we saw in the previous section, might claim their position to be true, but cannot live as if it weretrue. In fact, determinists turn out so much to be free-willists that W. T.Stacehasconcluded that the determinism-free-will problem can hardly be a real problem at all; rather, it must simply involve a misunderstanding in our philosophicallanguage.

"It is to be observed that those learned professors of philosophy or psychology who deny the existence of free will do so only in their professional moments and in their studies and lecture rooms. For when it comes to doing anything practical, even of the most trivial kind, they invariably behave as if they and others were free. They inquire from you at dinner whether you will choose this dish or that dish. They will ask a child why he told a lie, and will punish him for not having chosen the way of truthfulness. All of which is inconsistent with a disbelief in free will. This should cause us to suspect that the problem is not a real one; and this, 1 believe, is the case. The dispute is merely verbal, and is due to nothing but a confusion about the meanings of words. It is what is now fashionably called a semantic problem."

It must be admitted, though, that the indeterminists are in an awkward spot too. They deny determinism as being incompatible with morality. But what do they replace it with? Actions and choices that are uncaused? But this would seem to make our actions and choices utterly spontaneous, capricious, irrational, and arbitrary. And certainly this is just as incompatible with

morality and responsibility as is determinism. Something is beyond one s control, and therefore not an object of praise or blame, as much whether it happened by pure chance as whether it was completely necessitated. But what, then, lies in this mysterious zone between pure chance and pure necessity? What might the indeterminist or free-willist *mean* by "uncaused" choices or "free" will? Some indeterminists or free-willists would withdraw at this point with a quiet, "I really don't know. But there must be some such. For it is certainly a bigger problem to reject morality than not to have a clear and coherent idea of free will. Take your choice. *But do you really have one?"*

Others, of a somewhat more analytic strain, have sought for clarification of our terms. We have seen that the whole determinism-free-will controversy is bound up with talk about causality, the principle that every event must have a cause. But is an act of the will really an "act" in any obvious or clear sense? And isa decision really an "event"? It has been suggested, not without merit, that maybe **t**he language in which the whole problem has been posed is inappropriate from the start. Has it been something like a Category Mistake again? In any event, William K. Frankena's exhortation is well-taken:

"… I think that moral philosophers cannot insist too much on the importance of factual knowledge and conceptual clarity for the solution of moral and social problems. *The two* besetting sins in our prevailing habits of ethical thinking are our ready acquiescence *in*unclarity and our complacence in ignorance—the very sins that Socrates died combatting over two thousand years ago."

5.5- Nietzsche's Challenge to Morality

Nietzsche on morality and human nature

Nietzsche gives an account of morality in non-moral psychological terms. He interprets moral values and the history of their development in terms of the will to power. In this material, we introduce Nietzsche's challenge to morality, returning to the connection with human nature at the end.

TheAttack on Morality

It is easy to misinterpret Nietzsche as rejecting everything about conventional morality. But he says:

"It goes without saying that I do not deny unless I am a fool that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged but I think that the one should be encouraged and the other avoided for other reasons than hitherto. We have to learn to think differently in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: to feel differently."

So the extent to which his attack will lead to different ways of acting is unclear; his concern is with the psychology of morality.Nietzsche has also been misinterpreted as attacking all values, which would be a form of nihilism. But he calls this 'the sign of a despairing, weary soul', refers to his new ideal as a morality, and speaks of the duties of free spirits and the new philosophers. What Nietzsche finds objectionable about conventional morality is that our existing values weaken the will to power in human beings. They are therefore a threat to human greatness. The moral ideal is a person who is not great, but a 'herd animal', who seeks security and comfort and wishes to avoid danger and suffering. Nietzsche's aim is to free those who can be great from the mistake of trying to live according to this morality.

And it is puzzling: isn't what is valuable what is great, exceptional, an expression of strength and success? So how did traits such as meekness, humility, self-denial, modesty, pity and compassion for the weak become values? This is the question that Nietzsche wants to answer with his 'natural history'.

On 'morality'

There are many particular existing moral systems Kantian, utilitarian, Christian, and the moral systems of other religions; but Nietzsche spends little or no time defining their differences. He attacks any morality that supports values that harm the 'higher' type of person and benefits the 'herd'. He also attacks any morality that presupposes free will, or the idea that we can know the truth about ourselves through introspection, or the similarity of people. But he also links these together, explaining the theoretical beliefs in terms of the moral values, and values in terms of favouring the conditions that enable one's type to express its power.

So what does Nietzsche mean by 'morality', the morality he means to attack? There are four ways we could try to categorize it:

1.By its values, e.g. equality, devaluation of the body, pity, selflessness;
2.By its origins in particular motives, esp. 'ressentiment';
3.By its claim that it should apply to all;
4.By its empirical and metaphysical assumptions, e.g. about freedom, the self, guilt.

PARTICULARITY OF MORAL SYSTEMS

If there were universal moral values, they would be the same for everybody, and all that a history of morality could do is tell us how we came to discover them and why people didn't discover them sooner. A 'history' of morality would then be like a history of science. Scientific truths themselves don't have a history, e.g. the Earth has always been round (since it existed at all). so there is no history to this fact. But we can tell the history of how people came to believe that the Earth is round, when previously they didn't believe this. But a history of morality is not like this we can tell the story of how values themselves changed. Not everyone accepts this. Many philosophers argue that there are universal moral principles, e.g. that morality is founded upon

pure reason, or that it rests upon happiness, and that we can know this. Nietzsche rejects this, as it assumes that there is no natural history of morality. In fact, this claim to universality is a specific feature of the morality we have inherited it assumes that what is good and right for one person is good and right for everyone. It does not recognise that there are different types of people, that what is good for one type is not good for another. But it matters who the person is, e.g. whether they are a leader or a follower. Nietzsche is particularly concerned with this distinction.

FREE WILL AND INTROSPECTION

Nietzsche argues that each person has a fixed psychophysical constitution, and that their values, their beliefs, and so their lives are an expression of this. A person's constitution circumscribes what they can do and become, relative to their circumstances. The will, then, has its origin in unconscious physiological forces. A 'thought comes when 'it' wants to not when 'I' want it to', and 'in every act of will there is a commanding thought'.

So an act of will has its origins in something else. And in general, whatever we are conscious of in ourselves is an effect of something we are not conscious of, e.g. the facts about our psycho-physiological constitution. Introspection, then, cannot lead to self knowledge. And yet conventional morality requires that we make moral judgments on the basis of people's motives; it presupposes that we can know, in ourselves or others, which motives caused an action. Even when we have clearly formed an intention, it is not (just) this that brings about the actual action we perform, but any number of other factors habit, laziness, some passing emotion, fear or love, and so on.

The idea that the will is 'free' is the idea that there are no causes of an act of will (other than the will itself) the person can will or not will. There is no course of events that leads to just this act of will. The will is its own cause, a 'causasui'. But this 'is the best internal contradiction ever devised'. Our experience of willing does not have to lead to this idea; so we should ask what purpose it serves.

One purpose is to defend our belief in ourselves and our right to praise. Another, more apparent in Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morals, Essay I, is that we can and should hold people to blame for what is in their power. At the point of action, they could have chosen differently, we think, so we can blame them for wrongdoing. The idea of freewill also relates to the idea that values purely and on their own could be the basis for an act of will. The will is not conditioned by anything of this world. The 'moral law' can determine the will itself. This locates moral values outside the normal world of causes, in a transcendent world.

But Nietzsche's attack on free will does not imply that the will is 'unfree' in the way that is meant by determinists. Whenever someone talks of being caused to act, this serves the purpose of denying any responsibility and reveals self contempt and a weak will. Free spirits experience free will and necessity as equivalent real creative freedom, e.g. in art, comes from following 'thousand fold laws', a sense of necessity it must be just like this, not like that. We make a mistake when we oppose freedom and necessity in the will.

Nietzsche tells several stories about how pity, self-denial and so on became values, how 'herd morality' came to dominate. One is from the perspective of the 'masters'; one is from the perspective of the 'slaves'. But a third explanation draws on the role of evolution in forming human nature. The three stories should be seen as complementary, together building up the whole picture.

Nietzsche writes that 'for as long as there have been humans, there have also been... a great many followers in proportion to the small number of commanders... obedience has until now been bred and practised best and longest among humans'. He continues later, 'the herd instinct of obedience is inherited best, and at the cost of the skill in commanding'. In evolution, what does not reproduce well does not survive in future generations. What enables a person to get on well with many other people will favour most individuals and their reproductive success but these will be 'herd' instincts and values, because by definition, the majority are the 'herd'. What is exceptional, what is great, is rare. So evolution opposes greatness and favours what is common. The kind of 'commanders' the herd favours are tame, modest, hardworking and public-spirited, commanders who actually serve the herd rather than commanding them.

Nietzsche develops the point further: to communicate with and understand other people, we have to share experiences with them. What thoughts and feelings words immediately bring to mind reflects our values. So people of different types will have difficulty understanding each other. People who are commanders will be hard for other people, the 'herd', to understand. And so they rarely procreate. If we are to breed new philosophers, and new philosophers are to breed the human race to become greater, we will have to draw on 'enormous counterforces' since we are in conflict with the natural forces of evolution.

However, the constraint placed on the will to power by 'herd' morality has been creative; it is 'the means by which the European spirit was bred to be strong, ruthlessly curious, and beautifully nimble'. This tension drives free spirits to overcome the ascetic ideal and prepare the conditions for new philosophers.

Nietzsche on master and slave morality

Beyond Good and Evil describes the fundamental division between the moralities of the 'herd' and of 'higher' people. While the contrast is stark, Nietzsche says, at the outset,

> *"I would add at once that in all higher and complex cultures, there are also apparent attempts to mediate between the two moralities, and even more often a confusion of the two and a mutual misunderstanding… - even in the same person."*

So his descriptions are 'idealized', while identifying the diverse origins of our actual morality.

Master Morality

In a master or noble morality, 'good' picks out exalted and proud states of mind, and it therefore refers to people, not actions, in the first instance. 'Bad' means 'lowly', 'despicable', and refers to people who are petty, cowardly, or concerned with what is useful, rather than what is grand or great. (Notice that none of this depends on the idea of free will.) Good-bad identifies a hierarchy of people, the noble masters or aristocracy and the common people. The noble person only recognises moral duties towards their equals; how they treat people below them is not a matter of morality at all. The good, noble person has a sense of 'fullness' – of power, wealth, ability, and so on. From the 'overflowing' of these qualities, not from pity, they will help other people, including people below them.

Noble people experience themselves as the origin of value, deciding what is good or not. 'Good' originates in self-affirmation, a celebration of one's own greatness and power. They don't need others to say they are good. They revere themselves, and have a devotion for whatever is great. But this is not self-indulgence: any signs of weakness are despised, and harshness and severity are respected.

A noble morality is a morality of gratitude and vengeance. Friendship involves mutual respect and a rejection of over-familiarity, while enemies are necessary, in order to vent feelings of envy, aggression and arrogance.

All these qualities mean that the good person rightly evokes fear in those who are not their equal and a respectful distance in those who are.

Slave Morality

Slave morality begins with the rejection of master morality. It does not and cannot stand on its own. The traits of the noble person are evil (not 'bad'), and what is good is their absence. Its focus is the relief of suffering – whatever is useful or opposes oppression is morally good. So pity, altruism, and a lack of interest in oneself are good. In opposing the noble morality, it also

encourages humility and patience. It questions the apparent happiness of the noble person, rejects hierarchy, and argues that morality is the same for all. But it is pessimistic about the human condition, doubting the goodness of this life, and so it sees people as weak and pitiful. So it must look to the future and believe in 'progress', in things getting better. It lacks respect for the past, for traditions and ancestors. Finally, when slave morality dominates, there is a tendency for 'good' people and 'good' actions to be thought of as 'stupid' or simple-minded.

The 'slave revolt'

If societies in Europe began with a noble morality, at some point, slave morality became dominant. How and when did this revolution in values occur? Nietzsche's third historical account, this one from the perspective of the slaves, identifies the Jewish prophets as the origin. It was they, he says, who 'fused "rich", "godless", "evil", "violent", "sensuous" into one entity, and were the first to mint the word 'world' as a curse word'. Worldly success (what was 'good') indicates moral failure (is now 'evil'). But the Jewish prophets were only the beginning – it is Christianity which carried forward the revolt. (While it is important that – at its origins – real class differences between these groups and the Greek and Roman aristocracy existed, as usual, Nietzsche is more interested in the psychological story. There is nothing specifically Jewish about a slave morality, and Nietzsche is uninterested in the differences between Jew, Christian and slave in this account.)

What drove this 'revaluation of values'? Nietzsche says the slave's 'manifold hidden suffering rages against that noble sensibility which seems to deny suffering'. The Roman rulers seemed, and valued being, free-spirited (reinterpret: wicked), self-confident (decadent), care -free (lazy), tolerant (unruly). They viewed slaves with contempt, pity, and disdain, causing hatred that could not be expressed directly. And so it turned into what Nietzsche calls elsewhere ressentiment, a kind of resentment. In someone with a slave mentality, the feeling grows as no action is taken. Instead of a political revolt, revenge took the form of a moral revolt. The pent- up feelings of resentment were expressed through blame, an idea that has little place in a noble morality.

A slave morality therefore centres on the question of blame, and not just for actions, but also for being who and how one is. This requires the idea that one could act or be different, and makes guilt (for not being or doing 'better') the heart of morality. Guilt causes suffering, but the slave has known only suffering, tyranny, being commanded – so morality becomes unconditional commands, e.g. of a God.

Ressentiment is a reactive rather than creative attitude towards the world, focusing on others, rather than oneself. It tends to produce self-deception – the slave morality must cover its origins carefully, not least because it disapproves of the very motives, of envy, hatred and ressentiment, that drive it. The sacrifice that morality requires is seen not as tyranny or revenge, but as an act of love. In contrast to the simplicity of the original nobles, it was through ressentiment, Nietzsche says, that 'the human soul became deep' (*The Genealogy of*

Morals), and certain kinds of cultural expression became possible, e.g. in response to the deep guilt people felt about themselves.

DISCUSSION

Can we take Nietzsche's history of morality seriously? He provides us with no references, no scholarly support or detailed analysis for his claims. Some philosophers argue that his claims are just random facts, impressions and anecdotes. But recently, philosophers have shown that Nietzsche read and relied on the best historical scholarship of his time. Still, can we believe that what explains the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire is ressentiment? Of course not – not on its own. There are other economic, social, and political factors. But Nietzsche does not need to deny this, even though he shows no interest in these other factors.

Nietzsche invites us to reflect on what he says. Henry Staten expresses the challenge well:

> *"What are we to say about this overwhelming spectacle of cruelty, stupidity, and suffering? What stance is there for us to adopt with respect to history, what judgment can we pass on it? Is it all a big mistake? Christianity attempted to recuperate the suffering of history by projecting a divine plan that assigns it a reason in the here and now and a recompense later, but liberalism is too humane to endorse this explanation. There is no explanation, only the brute fact. But the brute fact we are left with is even harder to stomach than the old explanation. So Left liberalism packages it in a new narrative, a moral narrative according to which all those lives ground up in the machinery of history are assigned an intelligible role as victims of oppression and injustice… Against the awesome 'Thus it was' of history we set the overawing majesty of 'Thus it ought to have been'.*"

We try to make sense of suffering throughout history by appeal to morality. Morality turns suffering into injustice, and then we have someone to blame. We find this reassuring; but how truthful is this response and how much confidence can we place in the values we appeal to? Nietzsche argues that the condemnation of suffering is in tension with greatness.

A different objection: Nietzsche commits a 'genetic fallacy' in attacking conventional morality by looking at its origins. Just because morality originated in the ressentiment of slaves does not mean that we should reject morality. The origins of an idea don't determine whether that idea is true, false, good or bad. Compare: Coleridge composed the poem 'Kubla Khan' while he was under the influence of opium; this doesn't tell us anything about whether the poem is good or bad.

Nietzsche can reply that this misunderstands his use of genealogy. First, our intuitions about values are formed by history, so we can only understand them by historical investigation. Any other approach will appeal to moral intuitions without understanding their (historical) nature. (Traditional ways of doing moral philosophy cannot succeed.)

Second, Nietzsche does not mean identify just the past origins of morality. Both master and slave moralities continue, evolved and mixed up, in us today. The motives present at the origin of slave morality continue to motivate morality today.

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